COMIC CRUSADER

NO. 11

WELCOME ABOARD

Yes, welcome aboard the rocket ship of Dr. Hans Zarkov, as we journey to the fantastic planet MONGO! In this special issue of "Comic Crusader" you'll see both the barbarism and the splendor of the world Alex Raymond created back in 1934.

I'm extremely grateful to the many people who contributed to this issue, both artist and writer alike. However, special thanks are due Al Williamson for this issue's beautiful cover and interior art. My thanks also to Joe Sinnott for the drawing on the last page of this issue. It's a personal favorite of mine and it's the closest I'll ever come to being on Mongo. On page 38 of this issue, you'll find a drawing, I believe unpublished, by Alex Raymond. Raymond did this while he served aboard the U.S.S. Gilbert Islands in 1945. It may be the ship's symbol. My thanks to Charles Roberts, a friend from Virginia, for sending it to me. Thanks also go to Detroit fan Jack Promo for lending me the Gray Morrow paintings of Dale and the Hawkgirl on page 14.

Those of you who are regular readers of "Comic Crusader" know I've never dedicated an issue to anyone before. With this issue, I am! It's dedicated to a man who is the Flash Gordon fan supreme. His narrative, over the Flash Gordon sound track Bob Cosgrove and I transcribed, kept us in hysterics. Without this man, the issue you see before you, could never be. This issue is dedicated to my friend.....

MIKE ROYER

Best—
Martin L. Greim

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COMING NEXT ISSUE!

ISSUE 12 - will have a barbaric flavor to it.

The feature article will be on Planet Comics' - "Lost World" by TOM FAGAN. A beautiful, full page illustration by JIM STERANKO accompanies this great article. It's one of the finest pieces Jim's ever done!

There will also be a strip or two - Some art by Berni Wrightson, Bob Juanillo and "Crusader's" regulars. A most unusual issue for only 50¢.

ORDER FROM

Martin L. Greim
Box 132
Dedham, Mass.
02026

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MONGO MANIA

ARTICLE BY:

MIKE ROYER

It's 1936 and Universal Pictures presents..... FLASH GORDON! The first of three Flash Gordon movie serials. A serial in 13 chapters, from the screenplay by Frederick Stephani, George Plympton, Basil Dickey and Ella O'Neill. Based on the newspaper feature entitled Flash Gordon, owned and copyrighted by King Features Syndicate. Photography by Jerry Ash and Richard Fryer. Produced by Henry MacRae.

The Cast of Characters:

FLASH GORDON - Larry "Buster" Crabbe, DALE ARDEN - Jean Rogers, EMPEROR MING - Charles Middleton, DR. ZARKOV - Frank Shannon, PRINCESS AURA - Priscilla Lawson, PRINCE BARIN - Richard Alexander, PRINCE THUN - James Pierce (who played Tarzan in "Tarzan and the Golden Lion" in 1927 and was Tarzan on the radio, in the early 30's), KING KALA - Duke York, Jr., HIGH PRIEST - Theodore Loroh, KING VULTAN - John Lipson, OFFICER TORCH - Earl Askam, ZONA - Muriel Goodspeed, PROFESSOR GORDON - Richard Tucker, PROF. HENSLEY - George Cleveland (kindly old "Gramps" of the original "Lassie" T.V. family in the 1950's).

The first few chapters faithfully follow the basic story elements of Alex Raymond's colorful Sunday pages. Where they do differ in plot, it is a case of budget which prohibited adding large casts, new sets and locales....and at the same time, the cast of a story that is seen only once a week, for approximately 20 minutes, it becomes quite necessary for the roster of characters to remain intimate, otherwise the viewer would need score cards to keep track of who's who. We'll concern ourselves with this point later, in various places.

Chapter one - "The Planet of Peril" (or..."When Worlds Collide, Anyone?")

At a large east coast observatory, we find Prof. Gordon and Prof. Hensley watching the approach of a mysterious planet, through the eye of a huge telescope. Both scientists agree, that the Earth is doomed.....as a result of a collision with the mysterious body in space. This is similar to the opening of the Jan. 7, 1934 Flash Gordon strip, in which a newspaper banner headline declared..."World Coming To End"..."Strange new planet rushing toward Earth - only miracle can save us, says science."

On film, Hensley remarks - "I wonder why we don't hear from Zarkov? I still believe in his theory!" Prof. Gordon - "Ridiculous! Zarkov is mad! His theory's fantastic! He'll never reach the planet in that rocket-ship!"

Dr. Zarkov is introduced to the strip reader by Raymond's following narrative..."The scientist, Dr. Zarkov works day and night, perfecting a device with which he hopes to save the world--his great brain is weakening under the strain!"

At the observatory, the two scientists read several telegrams appraising conditions and reactions all over the world. As they read, the movie viewer sees several pieces of stock newsreel type footage depicting panic, pandemonium and riots all over the world. Thus far, the flesh and blood characters of Gordon and Hensley are acting only as audio and visual translaters of Raymond's comic strip narrative panels 2, e, 4, and 5 of the first Sunday page. The use of screen scientists is more effective than voice over narrative and better paced than the staccato tempo of Raymond's first Sunday page.

Prof. Gordon is handed one last telegram. "Why... It's from my son, Flash!" pause to read - "He gave up his polo cane just in time to catch the transcontinental plane...hoping to be here with us before the end!"

The scene shifts to that transcontinental plane. Aboard we find young virile Flash Gordon. In the strip, he is introduced to us as "...Yale graduate and world-renowned polo player." Across the aisle from Flash, sits the very attractive blond, we will soon discover is Dale Arden...soft and beautiful. Larry Ivie tells us that Miss Rogers was allowed to appear with her normal hair color because of the public's fondness for

My favorite Flash shot Marty -
Joe Kubert

① Aboard the transcontinental plane, Flash helps Dale with her chute.
② The meeting with Dr. Zarkov. ③ Aboar' Zarkov's rocket ship.

the color at the time, as popularized by the "Blond Bombshell" Jean Harlow. Dale's hair color, as drawn by Raymond, was brunette.

The airplane is being tossed about violently in a fierce electrical and meteor storm, caused by the close proximity of the strange planet. The pilots, afraid that their craft may not survive the meteor shower, advise their passengers to make use of the parachutes that they will find at the back of their seats. The passengers hurry to exit the plane. Dale hesitates at the open door - Flash moves to her side, says - "Scared, huh?", takes her in his arms, and leaps from the plane, both of them supported by the girl's chute.

In the strip, a flaming meteor tears loose from the approaching "comet", (as Raymond called it this first week) and sears off a wing of the plane. Flash takes the girl, who was sitting across the aisle from him, in his arm and "bails out", as the stricken plane plummets earthward. They land near the observatory of Dr. Zarkov, where they see a rocket ship.

On film, Flash and Dale approach the rocket ship, when suddenly Zarkov steps from concealment, holding a gun. Zarkov - "Stop! Stay where you are!" Flash - "I'm sorry if we're intruding. Parachutes aren't particular where they set you down." Zarkov - (ignoring Flash's sarcasm) "Who are you?" Flash - "Well, I didn't have time to drop a calling card! This is Miss..." He turns to Dale. Dale - "Dale Arden!" Flash - "Nice name", then to Zarkov, "And I'm Flash Gordon!" Zarkov - "Gordon...Gordon? Prof. Gordon's son?!" Flash - "Yeh...that right! An' that rocket ship makes you Dr. Zarkov!"

In the strip, Zarkov forces Flash and Dale, at gunpoint, to accompany him to Mongo as martyrs to science. In the film, Zarkov explains that his assistant has turned coward and asks Flash to go with him to save the Earth. Dale accompanies the two men, because there is no place of safety on the Earth where she may remain. With an explosion, Zarkov's rocket lifts into the air and rockets into the stratosphere. The trip is uneventful, with the exception of when Dale almost passes out from lack of oxygen, which reminds Zarkov to turn it on... something he forgot to do in the excitement of take off.

Things are a bit different in the comic strip. (1-14-34) The closer they approach the comet threatening Earth, the madder Zarkov becomes - until he finally cracks. A battle ensues between Flash and Zarkov, with Flash finally knocking the doctor to the floor unconscious. The rocket succumbs to the planet's gravitational pull and crashes. Flash scrambles from the wreck, with the unconscious Dale Arden in his arms, only to be menaced by a giant lizard. Zarkov has been left behind, buried under debris in the control section of his rocket... presumably dead.

In the film, the ship makes a perfect and smooth landing and the trio emerge unenjured to be menaced by lizards. Now the lizards of the serial are stock "budget" dinosaurs...i.e. Lizards with fins scotch-taped to their backs, blown up photographically, and superimposed with shots of the live actors. Despite this fact, Universal's effects people did a fair job with this sequence.

The trio is saved, from the menace of the lizards, by the approach of a strange rocket ship. It swoops down over the lizards and kills them with a ray shot from the nose of the ship. The ship lands next to Zarkov's and two metal clad soldiers emerge from the ship. This scene is almost a literal translation of panel 8...Jan. 21, 1934...Torch's ornate dragon brestplate and all.

To their rescuers, Flash says - "Thanks for saving us." Torch - "Stand back! You are prisoners!" Flash - "Prisoners?!" Torch - "Silence! You are to be taken to Ming, Emperor of the Universe!" And indeed they are. They are flown in Torch's ship to a city atop a mountain peak. We see the large throne room of Ming, Emperor of the Universe. Several steps lead to the dias, where Ming sits on his throne. At the bottom of the steps is an area large enough to double as an arena...which it does shortly. Ming is surrounded by soldiers in their Roman-like garments and to his side, the ever present High Priest. Ming glares at his three captives and demands to know their reason for entering his kingdom. Zarkov explains that his planet is rushing madly towards the planet from which they came, and that collision can only mean the distruction of both. Ming replys - "No, there will be no collision. I control absolutely the movements of this planet, and I will destroy your Earth in my own way." This is an interesting piece of dialogue, because, here the serial writers clear up something Raymond apparently didn't consider worth messing with - an explanation as to why Earth and Mongo never colided. With Flash's landing, on the strange planet, Raymond never again concerned himself with this

problem...the reason why our heroes rocketed to Mongo in the first place. By the third Sunday, the readers probably weren't worried about it...there was enough happening to Flash. However, on film, an explanation was very important, to retain plausibility and credibility. So...there you have it.

In the strip, the two prisoners before him, Ming declares, "The beauty of the female pleases me--she shall be my wife---the young man shall be slain..." Flash trys to break free of the soldiers, to get at Ming, and the Emperor orders that he be taken to the arena, where he will meet in mortal combat the four red monkey men of Mongo. (end of Sunday page no. 3... 1-21-34.) On film, in response to Ming's remarks about destroying the Earth, Zarkov, in an action never explained afterward, (one must speculate that he is only playing for time, or is still greatly concerned with the prevention of Earth's destruction) says - "Why destroy the Earth - why not conquer it?" Ming agrees. Zarkov explains how it was a rocket, of his own design, that brought him to Mongo. Ming then orders him taken to his laboratory, where he will be given all that he desires, except his freedom. When Ming turns his attentions to Dale, Flash lunges at him, trying to choke him. He is recaptured and thrown into the arena, that I mentioned previously. Princess Aura pushes her way past soldiers and hand maidens to stand beside her father's throne. Aura - "A bargain father! If he survives, he is mine!" Ming sneers - "IF!"

A gong is struck, and Flash stands in the arena as three man-beasts, with long fangs, dressed only in fur G-strings, snarl to the attack. These are the film counterparts of Raymond's Monkey Men. Ming watches intently, as one by one, Flash disables the ape-men. Ming - "He fights well, the Earthman! But he shall not escape the pit!"

④ Flash, Dale and Zarkov are brought before King the Merciless!
⑤ Dale watches, as the Monkey Men are released. ⑥ Flash vs. Monkey Men!

especially for one who is flying a rocket ship for the first time. Ming comments that whoever that gallant pilot is, he will be royally rewarded...if he survives the flight.

In the comic strip, after Flash enters the rocket ship, Aura slams the door shut and bolts it. Aura - "Now! You are mine! Dale Ardan shall not have you! I shall hold you here until she becomes my father's bride!" Note that Raymond incorrectly spelled Dale's last name. He did this for weeks.

On film, Flash isn't doing bad. He brings one of the Gyro ships down, but before he can do more damage to the invading fleet, the nose of his ship becomes engaged with the lead Gyro ship and the two vessels spin, locked together, to the ground below. Flash, unhurt, leaps from his wrecked ship at the same time as Prince Thun emerges from his ship. The bearded Lion Man draws his sword and lunges at Flash. Flash disarms the Lion Man. Thun - "Why do you not slay me?" Flash - "I fought only to save my friends who are prisoners in Ming's palace!" Thun - "Then you're not an ally of Ming?!" Flash - "I'll say I'm not! He's been trying to kill me ever since I landed here!" Thun explains, after introducing himself, that Ming is also his enemy. So an alliance is formed between Flash and the prince of the Lion Men. Above them, Ming's fleet is defeating the Gyro ships, who are now retreating. Thun leads Flash to a secret passage that leads to the palace. There, they hope to rescue Dale. Notice how everyone knows where all the secret passages and doors are?!

Thun and Flash capture a guard, at the rear gate of the palace and force him to lead them to Dr. Zarkov. They greet each other excitedly and here we find out what concerns Flash more than the safety of the Earth. Zarkov - "Flash! I didn't know what they had done to you!" Flash - "Ah, I'm alright! This is Thun, a friend!" Zarkov - "Flash! The course of this planet has been changed! The Earth will not be destroyed!" Flash - "Ah, that fine! Where's Dale?!" Flash soon learns that Ming is forcing her to become his bride, in a ceremony held in a secret chamber under the palace. Flash forces a guard to lead he and Thun to the place of the ceremony, but the guard stops at the entrance of a tunnel, for fear of the great beast that guards it. Meanwhile, everyone is gathering in the underground wedding ceremony chamber. At one end of the room is a large stone idol of Tao. Dale is escorted into the room, wearing a long white flowing open middriff gown. She is obviously under the hypnotic spell of the dehumanizer. She stares blankly into space. The ceremony begins. In an alcove, off the chamber, a soldier strikes a large gong. He's separated from the others by a wall of drapes. One of Ming's lieutenants, informs Zarkov (who got in the easy way, with Ming) that with the 13th stroke of the sacred gong, the wedding ceremony will be completed.

Back in the underground tunnel Flash and Thun are on their way to stop the wedding, when they hear the gong reverberating through the catacombs. Thun explains its meaning and Flash plunges on to save Dale. At this point, they run into a detatchment of Ming's guards. A brief fight follows and Thun yells to Flash to go on without him. Flash races down the tunnel until he comes to two massive wooden doors. All the time, the gong is sounding at regular intervals. He pushes open the doors and in the mist filled tunnel beyond, comes face to face with the giant beast that guards the Tunnel of Terror. Flash is grasped in its crab like claws and lifted off the ground. As the picture fades, the last thing we see is the yawning jaws of the hideous protector of the tunnel about to close on a helpless Flash Gordon.

Chapter three - "Captured by the Shark Men"

We see the recap scenes, as Thun grapples with the soldiers of Ming. Flash rushes headlong into the clutches of the Tunnel of Terror monster. While all this is going on, the priest is lighting bowls of incense that rest on the base of the large idol of Tao. The gong continues to ring out. As Flash is about to be crunched by the beast, Thun rushes into the scene, carrying a ray rifle that he has apparently gotten from the defeated soldiers. Flash's body goes limp. Thun aims carefully and fires, striking the monster in the mouth. Flash is dropped to the ground and the monster falls on its back, writhing in pain as it dies. Assuring Thun that he's alright, the two once again push on,

racing against time. They discover the chamber and by the shadows on the alcove wall, we see Flash jump the gong wielder and trottle him. There are a few moments of silence and the wedding party becomes uneasy. Ming demands - "Why does not the sacred gong sound the final note which completes the wedding ceremony?!" As if in answer, everyone's attention is commanded by a movement of the Great God Tao's arm. The huge statue begins to wobble on its base, then it topples over into the midst of the startled wedding guests. The whole situation is one of chaos. During the confusion, Flash and Thun rush into the chamber. It is obvious that they are responsable for the idol's actions. While Thun covers those assembled, with his ray rifle, Flash lifts the dazed Dale into his arms and they make a break for freedom. Our heroes are now apparently taking an escape route that will take them even further underground. The tunnel is blocked by a wooden door, but one blast of Thun's ray rifle removes it. Back in the wedding chamber, Ming yells - "They're fleeing into the passage that leads to the underground river! Prepare to operate the water trap!" Aura - "But that will deliver them to Kala, king of the Sharkmen!" Ming - "Well!" Aura - "The Earthman Gordon must not be killed. He is mine!" Ming, to Torch - "Obey my order!" Zarkov - "You order their death?" Ming - "No, Dr. Zarkov! Death will not come to them so easily, heh!" Torch steps to a control panel. Meantime Flash, with Dale in his arms and Thun are running down a long spiral stone staircase. At the bottom, they are met by soldiers. Again Thun creates a holding action, as he yells to Flash - "Take her away! I can handle 'em!" With Dale in his arms, Flash starts downward again, leaving Thun fighting the soldiers. Torch and Ming are watching the escape, through a view glass on a wall control panel. Torch informs Ming that Aura has followed the others into the river tunnel. Ming orders that Kala be notified to make prisoners of them all, his daughter included, if they live to reach his palace. Flash and Dale come to the end of the tunnel and find their way barred by a door they can not open. At this same moment Torch is turning a handle on a control board that drops Flash and Dale through a trap door. This deposits them into an underground river, where they are subdued by Sharkmen.

Princess Aura comes upon Thun rising to his feet at the bottom of the stone staircase, evidently the victor in his fight. Aura - "The Sharkmen have taken them prisoner! I can get into Kala's palace if you'll help me!" Thun - "I'll do anything to help my friends!" They turn back the way they came.

Flash and Dale find themselves prisoner in the Hydra-cycle, the underwater craft of the Sharkmen. It is interesting that the serial model makers made the same mistake in constructing this craft that Raymond did. They put the propellors on the front of the underwater craft! It just won't work, fellas. Oh well, despite this fact, with only one stop to avoid being seen by an octosac, the Hydra-cycle makes it to the Sharkmen's underwater city. The octosac is diverted by the arrival of a giant shark, that engages it in battle. Actually, what we see is a piece of stock footage of a shark and octopus fight. It probably wowed 'em in 1936, but today it only contributes in helping make this episode one of the most dull and padded of the whole series. The model of the Sharkmen's city is a bit disappointing, compared to the other cities to be seen in the serials. It just looks like a bunch of radio tubes stuck in the ground. Oh well...picky, picky.

Our heroes are brought before King Kala. Kala tells them that Dale is to be returned to Ming. Enraged, Flash yells - "For what reason?!" Kala - "One does not question the orders of Ming! They are obeyed!" Flash - "Yes...obeyed by you and other puppets!" Kala - "I am King Kala!" Flash - "You, who call yourself a king, are a coward!" Kala - "Coward!? I can crush the life out of you with my hands!" Flash - "If I could be killed by a weakling like you, I should welcome death!" Kala - "Prepare yourself!" Well, as you can guess, Flash fights with Kala and after a furious fight defeats him. As his soldiers help him to his feet, Kala says - "You are the first man to ever defeat me in physical combat. I salute you! Take them to their seperate quarters... See that they are both released in the morning!" "Thank you Kala!", says Flash.

Flash should have saved his thanks, for Kala has him locked in a water tight room, which he soon floods with a torrent of water. With Dale in his clutches, Kala pulls a large handle and a side panel open in Flash's nearly flooded room. A giant octosac floats in. Flash sees it rising toward him. He tries to swim away, but it grabs him by the foor. Dale watches aghast, as Flash is pulled to the bottom of the tank room. Kala says - "No man can pit his strength against Kala...and <u>live</u>!" And as Flash is pulled to the bottom, his body encircled by the, unfortunately, by today's standards, unconvincing fake octosac, the picture fades, and we might find ourselves agreeing with Kala.

Up until this time, the serial has followed the strip to some degree. However, there was no octosac in the strip and Flash escapes from the tank cell with the aid of a mysterious party that passes an air helmet and a weapon to him through a panel in the wall. (Sunday page 3-25-34) Flash, in the serial, escaped in a different way, as we will see in the next chapter.

⑧ Thun and Flash, having interrupted the marriage ceremony, are about to exit, with the dehumanized Dale in Flash's arms.

Chapter Four - "Battling the Sea Beast"

After the printed foreward and recap scenes, we see Kala instructing some honey to see that Dale misses nothing. And so, while Flash fights for his life, Zona holds Dale at the window. Dale faints and falls unconscious. She is then taken by Sharkmen guards to her saran wrapped quarters. Leaving the alcove, Kala is faced by Aura, who marches in followed by Thun, demanding to know what he has done with the Earthman. Meantime, Flash struggles with the phoney octosac. Aura pushes past the drapes to see Flash's predicament. Aura - "Stop that fight...at once!" Kala - "How does one stop an octosac?" Aura - "By drawing the water from the tank! Now DO IT!" Flash is saved. Aura leaves to release Flash, while Thun is left to stand guard over Kala. Dale regains consciousness and joins Thun. From their window, Thun and Dale see that Flash is all right. Dale is ready to go to Flash, but Thun cautions her that they should wait until Flash and Aura come for them.

Now the scene shifts to Ming's city atop the mountain peak. Zarkov is seated at a radio set, attempting to make contact with Earth. On Earth, Prof. Gordon and Hensley are also before a radio set. Hensley - "What do you make of it, Prof. Gordon?" Gordon - "I believe the sounds, which have so far defied scientific detection, are signals from that strange planet whos wild rush toward the Earth stopped so suddenly and mysterously."

Hensley - "You believe that someone from another planet is trying to signal us?" Gordon - "Yes!"

Zarkov's attempts are interrupted by Ming, who is entering the lab, via the long stone staircase. Ming assures Zarkov that his friends are being cared for by Kala. Zarkov asks - "But how can you be sure that Kala will obey your order?" Ming - "Kala's palace is constructed from a metal produced in this laboratory. It is held under water by a magnetic force controlled from here. He is absolutely in my power!"

In another part of the lab, Capt. Torch and another fellow, dressed like a medieval monk, are watching the screen of the space-o-graph. On the screen, several soldiers of Ming are fighting with a bunch of cave men types. Torch says - "Looks like a fight between the outer guards and Queen Lura's cave men! I must warn the Emperor!" Torch steps up to Ming and Zarkov, who are engaged in a psuedo-scientific discussion, but Ming brushes him away, not wishing to be disturbed. Torch turns and marches away, back to the space-o-graph.

Back at the city of the Sharkmen, Aura and Flash come upon a Sharkman standing before a wall lined with all kinds of switches and gauges. Aura - "We must overpower the guard!" Flash - "Why?" Aura - "To aid our escape!" Flash jumps the fellow and most of the time we see the fight in shadows on the wall. This shadow fighting is nowhere near as effective as Michael Curtiz would do a few years later in the dueling sequences on films like "Adventures of Robin Hood" and "Sea Hawk". However, it at least shows somebody wanted to do something besides stock stuff.

As Flash throttles the Sharkman, Aura picks up a ray-pistol, dropped during the fight, and fires it at the control panel. Aura explains that only by knocking out the machine that provides air and keeps the water out of the city, can they make good their escape. Flash asks about Dale and Thun and Aura replies - "We musn't think of them now!" Flash - "I'm going back after them!"

Back again in Ming's lab, we find Torch and the space-o-graph operator still watching the screen. However, the image on it now is the control panel Princess Aura has just destroyed.

In Kala's throneroom alcove, Dale is having great difficulty in breathing. Kala - "Something has happened to the air machines!"

At the space-o-graph, Torch orders its operator to find out what is the matter. On the screen we see panels straining, as water is trying to force its way into the palace. Dale falls to the floor unconscious. Knowing that they can not save themselves, Kala says to Thun - "Our only hope lies with Ming!" As more and more water rushes into the city, they try to get through to Ming on the space-o-graph.

As you can tell, several things are happening at once. The rapid cuts from place to place help greatly in building up the fever pitch that now will lead us to the climax of this installment.

Torch, seeing on the space-o-graph, that the Shark palace is starting to crumble, races over to Ming to tell him about this. Ming - "Why was I not informed before?" Torch's reply is - "But your Majesty, I tried to..." But we know differently, don't we. What happened to Queen Lura?! Hmmm. What the serial writers had in mind is open to speculation, but it's interesting that the editors left in the footage which was the beginning of something that was obviously never returned to. And why Queen Lura? In the strip, it is Queen Azura who rules the cave world. Was it her soldiers shown on the space-o-graph earlier, before the Shark city sequence? Double Hmmm!!

Ming, Zarkov and Torch stand before the viewscreen. Zarkov - "Can nothing be done to save them?" Torch - "Too late!" The screen shows Flash and Aura race to the throneroom, rivets strain, water pours down corridors, and Kala turns knobs. Flash runs up, picks up Dale in his arms. Flash - "Thun! We've got to get out of here!" Thun - "We haven't a chance!" Flash - "Why not?" Kala - "It's only a couple seconds before the sea will rush in!" As our heroes all turn to leave the alcove, they look up to see a giant tidal wave coming at them. As the picture fades, our heroes are completely obliterated from view, by a wall of water.

Chapter Five - "The Destroying Ray"

After the wall of water hits them, we see that our cast of characters still are standing. Back at Ming's laboratory, the Emperor says - "There may be a chance to save them, Zarkov!" Ming slowly walks across the lab to a huge generator apparatus that wasn't there last chapter. Ming - "This generates a ray which counteracts the magnetic power that holds the Shark palace under water." Then he orders - "Shut off all power in the laboratory!" He works the controls on the device. A beam of light moves up from the center of the generator, reaching towards the ceiling. On the viewscreen, we see a crater in which the Shark city was resting, as the city rises from the ocean floor. Ming turns off the machine and they all return to the screen. Zarkov - "The Shark palace is above water!"

It is interesting to note, that part of chapter 3 and all of chapter 4 and the first part of chapter 5 was deleted when Universal released the feature version "Rooketship", a condensed version of the serials.

Ming orders Torch to organize a rescue party to be sent to the Shark city. Meantime, our leads, Flash, Dale, Thun and Princess Aura, all sopping wet, leave the palace and enter a cave. That's right...a cave. You got me!? As Torch leads a detachment of soldiers through an underground tunnel, apparently leading to the Shark city, Zarkov sits before a view screen, we must assume, watching the rescue operations. Creeping stealthfully into the lab is a heavy set fella, who watches Zarkov intently. His outfit is patterned loosely after the one Barin wears in the comic strip. He steps out revealing himself to Zarkov. (shame on you Barin!) Barin explains that he is the real ruler of Mongo and that he was dethroned as a child, by Ming the Merciless, who killed his father. Barin - "A scientist of your genius can aid me in overthrowing Ming." Barin and Zarkov clasp hands and they leave the lab to rescue Flash and company. Moments later, in Barin's rocket, which is parked at the entrance of a cave, they blast off. These serial writers have really got a thing about caves, don't they.

Our cast emerge from a cave mouth and start down a rock strewn path that leads into a desolate level terrain. Nearby, winged Hawkmen are circling to land. Our heroes are on the way to Prince Thun's kingdom... a matter which they discussed while in the cave. Flash spies the Hawkmen and Aura explains that they are King Vultan's men and Thun adds that they are deadly enemies. They start to run for cover, but are jumped by the Hawkmen. Flash yells for Thun to take the girls to safety, as he grapples with the winged men. Thun takes off with the girls, but Aura drops behind and returns to watch her beloved Earthman. A good thing too, for Thun and Dale walk right into the clutches of more Hawkmen. Thun is knocked out, and he and Dale are borne skyward. At the same moment, Barin's rocket ship is landing in a nearby clearing. At the sight of reinforcements, the Hawkmen, fighting Flash, retreat. Zarkov

introduces Flash to Barin. Flash - "You came just in time! Aura, where's Dale?" Aura tells him that the Hawkmen have taken her and Thun away. Flash - "We've got to find them at once!" Aura - "No! There isn't a chance. King Vultan's palace is in the sky!" Barin - "My rocket ship is at your disposal." Against Aura's wishes, they rush to the rocket ship and with an explosion, take off to the rescue.

We now shift our attention to the beautiful Sky City of the Hawkmen, supported in the sky by beams of light. Under haloes of brightly lighted tubes, the beautiful Dale lies on a table. About her, stand Hawkmen. King Vultan comes forward to see how the reviving Dale is coming along. We are in a chamber off to the side of Vultan's majestic throne room. A Hawkman says - "She is recovering, Sire!" Vultan - "What has been done with the Lionman who was captured with her?" Hawkman - "Why, he was revived and sent to the atom-furnace, as your Majesty ordered." We are shown Thun, in the atom-furnace, as he and other slaves, stripped to the waist, shovel stuff into furnaces, as they are whiped by a Hawkman guard. And meantime our friends, who are rocketing toward the Sky City, are spotted by Hawkmen lookouts. One is sent to report to the king. On a balcony is a giant gun, that looks remarkably like a studio flood lamp. Hmm. Back at the table, Dale breathes heavily and calls out for Flash. Vultan - "She calls for a Flash! We shall have to provide a Flash for her, if that's what she wants. A HaHaHaHaHa!" Vultan is a jolly fat man, isn't he? Dale wakes up, and shook at the sight of this big bearded fat man with wings, runs for the door. But her way is barred by a guard. Oooh...has she got a nice body. Oh well...back tothe story. A soldier reports Barin's rocket and Vultan orders it destroyed with the melting ray, then he orders everyone from the throne room. Vultan - "Can't you see I'm busy?!" Do you blame him gang?!

The men on the balcony receive their orders to destroy Barin's ship and proceed to do so. They turn the ray beam into the heavens searching out Barin's ship. The ship is bathed in the light. Barin - "The melting ray from Vultan's defence gun!...They're trying to destroy us!" Zarkov - "Then we're doomed!" Barin - "Certainly are, if the ray hits the ship!"

Back in the throne room, Vultan continues to chase Dale around the palace, chuckling all the while. He swaggers around...Dale gets more and more nervous. She stands in front of the throne, as he walks to the wall to the right of his throne, a duplicate of Raymond's drawing, where he pushes a button. A wall panel slides away, and a bear, covered with candy stripes emerges. Dale runs across the room and stands, back against the wall, watching as the bear comes closer, a ring in its nose.

Back in the rocket ship, things are getting hairier. They just can not escape that ray. Aura asks if there isn't any way they can escape it. Barin tells her the resisto force of their rocket ship is being neutralized by the ray. Incidentally, Barin's dialog here is dubbed in. Richard Alexander, his back to the camera, did not speak the dialog. It's a different voice. Wonder what he really said?

Her back to the wall, arms spread, Dale heaves her breasts and begs Vultan to take the bear away. Vultan ushers the bear back through the opening in the wall, giving it a swat on the rump as it passes by him. He steps forward...she breathes deeper. He comes closer and Dale looks as if she's really about to get it. The picture goes back as Vultan marches into the camera. Fade to the rocket ship, where Barin is struggling with the controls. All of a sudden there's an explosion at the front of the ship, we hear Aura scream, and the ship drops, falling through space. So episode 5 ends with Flash, Zarkov, Barin and Aura about to lose their lives, and Dale about to lose her virginity. Don't tell me

⑨ Zarkov, Barin, Aura and Flash on the rescue mission to free Dale and Thun from Vultan.

this first batch of serials was filmed for kids. We know that first Ming and now Vultan, want more than just holding hands with Dale.

Chapter six - "Flaming Torture"

The recap scenes of this chapter are in a quite different order than those ending the previous chapter. Right after the printed synopsis, we see Vultan, who laughing boistrously, is menacing Dale. He steps to the wall, and we have the bear bit. Dale screams, take him away. Cut to the ship, and this time while Barin gives his line about the risisto force being neutralized, we see a close shot of Aura, looking up adoringly into Flash's face. Last episode, it was a shot of the group standing at the front of the rocket, Barin seated at the controls. Hmmm! The light bathes the ship, there is the explosion, and it falls dramatically downward. The officer at the lamp orders another to report to Vultan that his orders have been carried out. The ship falls, Barin fights the controls, and it suddenly stops. Flash - "What happened Barin? What stopped the fall?" Barin - "We were saved by the gravity defying rays that support the Sky City!" Zarkov - "Then we're safe?" Barin - "As King Vultan's prisoners our chances are slim!"

Back in the throne room, Vultan ushers the bear through the wall entrance, slaps its butt, then walks menacingly toward the delicious Dale. I prefer this method of intergrating the old scenes with the new, but this is the only time they really do it, except when they're cheating their way out of last weeks cliff hanger. We'll see a lot of this in "Trip to Mars" and "Conquers the Universe".

Vultan tries to grab Dale, saying "Ahh, be reasonable!" He pulls her to him. As they struggle, they are interrupted by the soldiers that bring in the prisoners; Flash, Zarkov, Barin and Aura. Dale runs and throws her arms around the manacled Flash.

Flash and Barin are sentenced to the furnace rooms, Zarkov to Vultan's laboratory and Aura a prisoner, to keep her father, Ming, from attacking the Sky City. Meanwhile, Torch informs Ming they've found an injured Hawkman who tells them that Flash and the others have gone with Barin, in his rocket ship, to rescue Dale. Ming - "Where Vultan will no doubt compel the Earth-girl to marry him. It's a habit of his!" You should talk, Ming! Of Barin, he comments - "Barin, aye...I thought that trecherous pretender would interfere." Ming orders his rocket fleet prepared to fly to the Sky City to teach Vultan a needed lesson.

Back at the Sky City Zarkov is told his friends will continue feeding radium to the Atom furnaces until he discovers a new force to keep the Sky City aloft. Aura, in the meantime convinces Dale that the only way to save Flash's life is to convince Vultan that she loves him. She attempts this at a banquet that evening. Aura steps close to Vultan and tells him that the Earth-girl finds the men of Mongo more attractive than those of her own planet. Vultan is pleased at this. "My little doll!" He leans toward Dale and she shrinks away from his advances.

The scene changes to the furnace room, where Flash, Barin and Thun are feeding the Atom furnaces. Thun and some other skinny shell of a man turn a wheel that regulates the opening and closing of the massive furnace doors. Nearby, a Hawkman turns the large dials of what could be a giant clock, possibly a device also connected with the opening and closing of the furnace door. We mention it here, because it serves no purpose other than to suggest something is going on. It has no function. Perhaps it was inspired by the movie "Metropolis". Who can say. It looks good, but makes no sense. The skinny guy, working with Thun, falls to the floor unconscious. A Hawkman guard begins to whip him and Flash attacks. As the battle rages, an alarm sounds which Vultan hears in the banquet hall. Vultan arrives and restores order. Informed by the Captain of the guard, that Flash caused all the trouble, Vultan orders him to the Static Room! To test Dale's love for him, Vultan brings her to the Static Room, where she sees Flash hanging suspended between two poles. In front of him, large rods are coming together. As they meet, sparks explode all over the place. Flash is being electricuted. Dale screams. The rods meet again and sparks fly all over Flash's body. His body goes limp, and Flash is seemingly killed by the electrical current.

While almost all the events of the films are based on the events of the strip, they do not appear on the screen in the same order as in Raymond's narrative. In the strip, Dale decides on her own to try and save Flash by her wits...by pretending to prefer Vultan to Flash. In the strip, Zarkov shovels radium along with Barin, Thun and Flash. Princess Aura is not a hostage of Vultan, but a guest; there to seek her revenge on Flash for spurning her love. There is some involvement with Vultan's other wives, which is not used by the screen writers. We'll continue with the film version, and from time to time refer to its inspiration point from the colored Sunday page.

Chapter seven - "Shattering Doom"

Vultan, to test whether Dale loves him, instead of Flash, takes her to the Static Room, where Flash is being electrocuted. Dale screams - "Stop it - Stop it!" Flash has gone limp. Vultan - "So you do love the Earthman!" Dale - "No, but I can't bear to see him tortured!" Dale can stand it no longer, and she swoons. Vultan rushes forward to grab her, and he does...the sly dog, by placing his left hand under her left breast. She is then taken away to the maids in waiting. Aura rushes forward, a ray pistol in her hand, and commands Vultan to release the Earthman. Vultan doesn't, but after Aura explains he'll never wid Dale's love if he kills Flash, he orders him brought down. Flash is ordered brought to the lab, where Zarkov will counteract the shock and save him. Zarkov has been busy, while all this was going on. He has discovered a new force to keep the Sky City aloft, but his exultation is interrupted by the arrival of Aura and the Hawkmen carrying the unconscious Flash. Zarkov saves Flash, by placing him in a device that resembles a hollow iron lung, its interior lined with circular neon tubes. Zarkov activates the machine and Flash's body is bathed in the light of the tubes. Aura - "Will he live?" Zarkov - "Yes..."

Back at the throne room, we find Dale and Vultan. She no longer wears the harem type white wedding outfit that showed her soft figure off to such good advantage. Her body is now covered, from head to toe, by a medieval type gown...but you can still tell how nice Jean Rogers was built. I'm sorry...my mind is wandering. Hoo Hah! Vultan, attempting to amuse Dale, proceeds to make shadow pictures with his hands on the wall. Man, this Vultan is a real card.

Flash is pulled from the stimulator, by Zarkov and Aura. Flash removes Aura's arms from about his neck, as he says - "I'm grateful to you for saving my life..." Aura - "I want more than your gratitude!" Now, you tell me, after the way she delivered that line, that this show was made for kids. Wavoom! Flash - "I'm an Earthman. Someday I hope to go back to my own planet, and if I do, Dale Arden goes with me!" Boy!, is Aura madder than hops, at these words. Flash turns to leave the laboratory. A guard yells - "Stop!" Flash stops, and turns back in the direction of Aura. She grabs an acetylene torch off Zarkov's desk and menaces Flash with it. Aura - "Promise me you'll never see Dale Arden again, or I swear by the Great God Tao you'll never see anything again!" Flash stares at her, refusing to say anything. She holds up the torch to his

chest, as if about to raise it to his face...but his cold stare unhinges her. She drops it, and runs off, heartbroken. The guards try to take Flash back to the furnaces, but he escapes. Flash runs into the throne room to interrupt Vultan who is presenting Dale with a box of pretty jewels and baubles. He is promptly recaptured by Vultan's soldiers and returned to the furnace room. To prevent any more trouble from Flash, Zarkov is ordered to attach a wire to Flash's wrist and the other end to the furnace room control board. Flash is told that if he causes anymore trouble, a switch will be thrown, and he will be electrocuted instantly. As Zarkov leaves the furnace room, his eyes dart furtively, as if searching for something. Flash sullenly returns to work, now wired for electricity.

A tower sentry spies the approaching space fleet of Ming the Merciless. Vultan hears the alarm, as Princess Aura walks up to him and vows that now he will answer to her father for his defiance! Dale is ordered brought into the throne room.

Back at the furnace room, a shift change is called and Thun, Barin and Flash doggedly shuffel to sit and rest behind the short lead wall that is in the center of the furnace room. Out of sight of the guards, Zarkov sneaks into the room and creeps to Flash's side. He tells Barin to get a shovel. Zarkov - "I'm going to take this wire and attach it to the handle of a shovel..." Flash - "What for?" Zarkov - "When the time comes, you throw the shovel in the atom furnace. Remember...once you've thrown the shovel, your lives depend upon you reaching the shelter of this lead wall." Zarkov completes his work and sneaks back out of the room. The guards call for a shift change, so our heroes return to their work.

Again in the throne room, Ming and his retinue enter and march to Vultan's throne, where the Hawkman stands with the girls. Ming - "I come not for pleasure, but to punish!" Vultan - "Before your Majesty makes idle threats, you had better consider your position and your present surroundings!" At these words all the doors to the throne room open and in march Hawkmen carrying their ray rifles. Ming - "You dare to threaten your Emperor!" Vultan - "No-o-o...but perhaps we had better talk it over." To this point in the strip, Vultan has been a real son of a bitch...not the comic opera type heavy he's been so far on the screen.

In the furnace room, Flash holds his shovel so that it looks as if the wire is still attached to his wrist. At a moment when the guards aren't looking, Flash leans toward Barin, who is shoveling next to him and says - "Ready, Barin?" Barin - "Ready!" Flash and Barin throw their shovel loads into the furnace and Flash shouts (in a dubbed in voice track...it's not Crabbe) "Go for the wall, men!" Flash battles a guard with his shovel, while the others rush for the safety of the lead wall. Flash turns and throws his shovel into the furnace, as the door again opens. At the same instant a guard throws the switch which he believes will kill the troublemaker Flash. Flash, who is leaping over the

(10) Flash assists the fallen wheel turner who has been getting whipped for falling down on the job.

4' to 5' lead wall, is in mid-air as the shovel enters the furnace and the room is filled with a blinding explosion.

Chapter eight - "Tournament of Death"

Obviously, Flash has lept across the wall, to escape losing his life in the fantastic explosion that follows his hurling of the shovel into the atom furnace. He and his friends rush from the furnace room, as Flash yells they've got to get Dale. They burst into the throne room only to be captured again. Meanwhile, Barin has run to get Zarkov in the laboratory. Aura and Dale plead for Flash and Thun's lives to no avail. They are placed in front of the soldiers of Vultan, who take careful aim with their ray rifles. As they are about to fire, the palace suddenly begins to shake. There is chaos and confusion, and we see a long shot of the city as it begins to tip. Flash, with sword in hand, makes his way up to the throne, straight toward Vultan. At that moment, Zarkov rushes in shouting - "Stop...stop! The atom furnace has been destroyed! The beams which support the city are dying out, but I have discovered a new ray which will save the city!" Vultan orders the doctor to use it at once. Zarkov argees, on one condition...that his friends be given their liberty. Vultan promises, swearing by the Great God Tao. Zarkov returns to the lab and pushes a button on his device...and Gol-eee... all kinds of mad-lab things happen. Of course, the city returns to its normal position. Zarkov - "It's a success! My friends are now free!" Ming - "No! That promise shall not be kept!" Vultan - "I have sworn by Tao! My word is good!" Ming - "As Emperor of the Universe, it is my right to call a Tournament of Death...and the Earthman will have to enter it!" Vultan - "But if he survives, I hold you to his right - liberty, a kingdom of his own and the bride of his choice!" Ming - "Yes...Heh, if he survives!"

The Tournament of Mongo in the comic strip, is a beautiful lavish and barbaric happening, packed with violence and splendor. The serial makers plan their tournament too, but budget and size of cast dictates that some things will have to be changed. There'll be no hordes of armies of different races, no mammoth bowl-shaped arena, none of the romance and intrigue that catches Aura, Barin, Flash and Dale in its web, as can be found in the strip. But, that doesn't mean it can't still make the same statement...Granted, a bit simpler, but none the less, the same basic statement as the strip. Let's continue.

On film, Barin adds - "Do not forget, your Majesty, the same applies to anyone else forced into the tournament, and emerges victorious!" Vultan - "I will order the tournament to commence

at once!" It takes place in the area arena before Vultan's throne, in his palace.

The first event pits Flash against the mighty masked swordsman of Mongo; a large fellow, whose head is draped in a black hood. Of course, to anyone in the theater audience who has ever seen Prince Barin, they have a pretty good idea who he is. A very dull sword fight, which is over long, happens on the screen. As the supposidly furious fight goes on, everyone watching with concerted interest, Vultan asks Ming who the masked champion is. Ming tells him that he is the finest swordsman in all Mongo. After what seems like about two and a half days, Flash is able to catch the tip of his sword in the top of his opponents hood, unmasking him. Hold on folks...It's Prince Barin!!! Barin - "I'm sorry Flash...I was forced into this!" Flash - "I might of killed you!" Vultan - "Clever trap, Ming. But the Earthman won!" Ming - "Yes...He won the right to fight the mighty beast of Mongo!"
On his way to his chambers, Flash receives an explanation of why Barin entered the tournament. Barin hoped that he might wound Flash sufficiently to satisfy Ming, or that Flash would kill him, thereby ending his misery. Flash - "Misery?" Barin - "I love Princess Aura!" He exits. Thun cautions Flash that he will next fight a huge orangapoid...a beast that no man can conquer. Flash says he must fight it to save Dale. Flash reenters the arena, curtains at the far end of the room open, and there, in all its glory, is the sacred orangapoid...a giant ape with a rubber....oops...sharp horn on its forehead. Flash does such a double take, it's almost comical. The beast closes with Flash and it begins to look bad. The chapter ends with the beast bearing Flash to the floor. Dale screams...fade out.

One can only speculate. Is the orangapoid thrown in the serial, by the writers, to make up for leaving out all the other menaces of Raymond's tournament?

Chapter Nine - "Fighting the Fire-Dragon"

While Flash is apparently being overcome by the superior strength of the sacred horned orangapoid, Princess Aura has a hurried whispered conversation with the High Priest of Mongo. Aura - "Is there no way a man can conquer the sacred orangapoid?" Priest - "There is an ancient legend..." Aura - "Tell me!" Priest - "There is a white spot at the throat!" Princess Aura rushes across the throne room, grabs a spear from a startled guard, and runs into the arena area, where Flash is fighting for his life. Ming jumps to his feet yelling - "My daughter -! Get her out of there!" Vultan - "No! By your own laws, Ming, those who enter the arena must remain!"

At Flash's side, the princess hands our hero the lance and whispers in his ear. Flash turns, and drives the spear into the throat of the hairy beast, that then slumps to the floor mortally wounded. Ming - "Someone betrayed the secret of how the orangapoid could be slain!" (turning to the High Priest) "As High Priest it is your duty to find the traitor! Death will be his punishment!" If only Ming knew he was addressing the very man who ratted to Princess Aura. Oh well.

The tournament has been won, but crafty Ming, saying the arena of death is hardly the place for a celebration, declares that the victors will receive their rewards three days thence, at his palace on feast day. As you recall, in chapter 8, when rewards of the Tournament of Death were announced, the rewards were freedom, a bride and a kingdom. However, the kingdom idea was left out in chapter 9. Obviously, the writers and producer, at this point, are faced with changing the locale of the adventures, adding whole new casts and armies, if they intend to follow Raymond's narrative. It becomes apparent to only use Raymond as inspiration, rather than a blueprint. As mentioned before, to retain audience identification and interest, from week to week, it was necessary to keep the cast of characters intimate. So, it is at this point, the strip and the films go their seperate ways. The latter only occassionaly borrowing items from the formers narrative and incorporating them into the film scenario.

Back on film, Thun appologizes, but he is returning to his father's kingdom, not wishing to enter Ming's palace again. Flash and the bearded lionman shake hands, vowing to meet each other again. A scene quite easily inspired by that parting sequence between Flash and Barin in the strip.

We are now back on Mongo, and let's eavesdrop on part of a conversation between Ming and his High Priest. Ming - "Now that we're back in my own domain, I shall assume control of the situation!" In the lab, are Flash, Dale and Zarkov. The two men are confident that all is well, but Dale is worried, not trusting Ming. Dale wonders if the people on Earth can see them up there on Mongo.

At this point, let me point out that this is not the same laboratory set used in the opening episodes. It is smaller, and no longer high ceillinged as before. Why the change?

Zarkov assures Dale that he's positive they can, and that the sounds coming over the radio set he's sitting at are contact waves from the Earth. Zarkov vows he will not rest, until communication has been made.

Meantime, Ming and the High Priest continue to plot.

Priest - "Presents of King Vultan here complicates matters." Ming - "Vultan has very foolishly placed himself in my power. The Earthman Gordon must be removed... secretly and definately." Priest - "It shall be done, your Majesty!" Ming - "Remember, it is either he or you...the choice should not be difficult!"

The High Priest tricks Princess Aura into helping him. He tells her that she and Flash could live in happiness in the Sacred Palace of Tsu. All she would have to do is drug Flash and bring him to the Tunnel of Terror. There, she would administer a second drug that would erase all memory of the past. When Flash awoke, the first face he would see would be Aura's. (Editorial Comment - And her 40" bust) Aura comments that the Fire Monster, that guards the Tunnel of Terror, would never let them pass to the Sacred Palace. Priest - "At the mystic hour of midnight, the Fire Monster will be fast asleep, and nothing but the sacred gong can arouse him. I promise you the gong will not ring!" It's written all over Aura's face... at last she will possess the man she wants more than anything else in the world. She agrees! (Note - The fire breathing dragon must be the brother of the dragon Thun killed in the Tunnel of Terror back in chapter three. That Tunnel of Terror leads to a lot of different places. Huh, gang!)

The plan works. Barin and Flash drink drugged wine, that they think King Vultan has sent them. As both men sleep, Aura and her soldiers slip into the room and spirit the unconscious Flash away on a stretcher. A short time later, Zarkov finds the unconscious Barin and after reviving him, realize they are victims of a trick. Suspecting Princess Aura of this treachery, Zarkov, Barin, Vultan and Dale set out to find her. At her apartment, they find the fellow who delivered the drugged wine and force information from him.

At the Tunnel of Terror, Aura has administered the second drug and is about to enter the tunnel, when a soldier rushes up warning that Prince Barin and the others are on the way. The High Priest exclaims that if the Earthman is rescued, his head will be forfeited. Aura and her Flash-bearers rush into the smoke filled tunnel...but the dirty High Priest turns and strikes the gong. It awakes the terrible fire breathing dragon, that lumbers forth from the smoke filled recesses of the cavern. The soldiers run in stark terror and Aura screams. Aura - "You traitor! You've destroyed Flash Gordon!" Priest - "I have obeyed my Emperor!" As Barin and the others rush into the entrance, they see the dragon about to destroy Flash with its lethal bad breath.

Chapter ten - "The Unseen Peril"

Well, it looks like the High Priest has successfully carried out the orders of his Emperor...to rid Mongo of the Earthman! After castigating the High Priest for his treachery, Aura rushes back into the tunnel to stand beside her beloved. Zarkov yells - "I'll destroy it with this grenade!" and with that, the clever scientist pulls a grenade from his belt and throws it full into the yawning mouth of the hideous fire-dragon. Now you know why they call the good doctor a genius. It isn't every scients who is prepared for every eventuality as he is...a grenade, no less. Anyway, the expected happens. When grenade and the hot breath of a fire breathing dragon come together, it spells bad news for fire dragons, in anybody's book! Priest - "Sacrilege... You've killed the Fire Dragon that guards the Sacred Palace of the Great God Tao!" He curses Zarkov. Zarkov inspects the still form of his young friend. Dale looks at Zarkov, her eyes pleading for some kind of good news. Zarkov tells her that Flash has been given a powerful drug and that he can revive him, but isn't sure he can destroy the effects of the drug. Boy, does Dale sneer at Princess Aura, who stands, her head held high, contemptious of the others. Fade out. Later, in the throne room of Emperor Ming, we learn that Zarkov failed to destroy the effects of the drug. When Flash is to choose his bride, he states that he does not wish to choose a bride among strangers. He recognizes no one! King Vultan protests and accuses the High Priest and Aura of being responsable for Flash's condition. Ming orders Vultan taken away to the dungeons.

The only similarity between this portion of the film and the strip, was on May 5, 1935. After being captured by Queen Azura, queen of the Blue Magic Men, Flash drinks Lethium, and loses his memory. Flash does not recognize Dale or any of his other friends (5-12-35)

(11) Officer Torch - "Obey...or your friends die with you!" Dr. Zarkov - "Easy boy...Stand here!" Meaning the metal panel in the background, from which he will make Flash invisible.

and instead vows his loyalty and love to Azura.

On film, Zarkov at work in the laboratory, is interrupted by Barin who bursts in informing the doctor that Flash had been given the drops of forgetfulness and had gone away with Princess Aura. He also explains that Vultan protested and was imprisoned by Ming. Zarkov - "Bring Flash here, at once. I can counteract the effects of the drug!" Barin - "I doubt if he'll come. He knows none of his friends!" Zarkov - "Get him away from the princess! I will prepare for his safety, and go to you at once!" When Barin tries to get Flash to leave with him, Aura tells Flash that Barin is someone come to harm her. Heroic protector that he is, Flash jumps to his feet, sword drawn and attacks. While the battle rages, Aura nervously makes her way to an avenue of escape from the apartment. As the two men exchange blows, Zarkov comes in through the door, grabs Flash from behind and shouts for Barin to knock Flash out! The prince does, with the hilt of his sword. I guess Zarkov didn't want to see another 12 day boring fight between Flash and Barin again, so soon after the other dud. Ohhh...Michael Curtiz, where are you!

Aura has escaped, and our heroes rush, with the unconcious Flash, to the laboratory; hoping to get there before Aura warns Ming.

Entering the lab, Zarkov instructs Dale to lock the door after them, which she does! Zarkov then proceeds to restore Flash's memory, with a strange machine he lowers from the ceiling. Remember how at the opening of this episode, Zarkov wasn't sure he could destroy the effects of the drug? Well, as you can see, science never sleeps, or at least writers don't pay attention to what they've written, or...Hmm. The process succeeds and Flash's memory is returned. However, Ming has sent Torch and his men to Zarkov's lab to kill Flash and they arrive at just this moment. Torch opens the door and he and his men march into the room, to stand before Flash, Dale, Zarkov and Barin. By the way, this was the door locked (?) by Dale. Flash starts to grapple with Torch, but is restrained by Zarkov, who asks Flash to stand against a large metal panel on the wall. Torch orders his men to shoot, but before that can happen, Zarkov, smiling, flips a switch on a control board and before the astonished eyes of everyone, accompanied by a scream from Dale, Flash disappears from sight!

Again the only connection between this and the strip happens on July 14, 1935. In the strip, Flash regains his memory, when Dale and Zarkov, who are laboring in Azura's kitchens, discover Lethium is being put into Flash's drink and keep him from partaking of it. Warned by Dale, Flash forces Azura to drink the drug of forgetfulness and shortly thereafter he regains his memory. It is now Azura who can remember nothing.

Chapter Eleven - "In the claws of the Tigron"

At the sight of the disappearing Flash, the guards jump back, and in a panic they rush from the laboratory. Dale and Barin soon discover from Zarkov that it was he who made Flash disappear. Zarkov explains that he's discovered a ray that will render a human being invisible. Comforting Dale, that Flash still has plenty of life left in him, the doctor reverses the process, bringing Flash back to visibility. Zarkov further explains that as yet he knows not how long the invisible person may remain so, but against the pleas of Dale, Flash convinces Zarkov to again render him invisible, so that he may pay a visit to Ming unseen. Once again, Flash is made invisible, and we see the door of the lab open and close, as if by magic, as the invisible Earthman exits.

In his throne room, Ming is receiving an excited report from Toroh and his men about Flash Gordon. Ming - "You expect me to believe this impossible tale?!" Toroh - "I speak the truth, your Majesty! My men will bear me out in this!" Ming - "Bring in Flash Gordon, dead or alive! If you fail, your life will be forfetted!" All of a sudden, Ming is violently thrown back in his throne, clutching desperately at his throat. Flash - "Flash Gordon is here, your Majesty, and very much alive! Unless you release my friends, this is only a sample of what's in store for you!" Ming's soldiers try to find the invisible menace to no avail. Flash - "I could take your worthless life, Ming...but because of your daughter, Prince Barin asks that your life be spared!" Ming (having been released) - "Don't let 'em escape! Guard the door!" The soldiers rush to do so, but the invisible Flash is too much for them. Unable to lay their hands on him, Flash tosses them violently about. The invisable Flash yells up to Ming, from near the doorway. Flash - "I warn you Ming - this is only a sample! Keep your hands off my friends! I shall be watching you always!" We see the large door of the throne room close behind him.

In the comic strip, Flash also becomes invisible, but under different circumstances. Queen Azura has regained the throne Flash has wrested from her, and Flash, Zarkov and Dale are forced to flee the capitol city of this underground kingdom. While Azura's men search for them, Zarkov spends two days and nights completing his light machine with which he makes Flash invisible. (8-11-35) Casting only a shadow, which fills Azura's men with stark terror, Flash pays a visit to Azura at her palace, where he kidnaps the queen. Ultimately, she will become his ally against Ming.

Back on film, Ming realizes that Flash's invisibility is a result of Zarkov's work in Ming's own lab. Ming declares the machine must be destroyed, but Aura adds - "But not until the Earthman has again become visible!" Ming angered - "I've preserved the life of this Earthman long enough, because of your whims! Now I -" Aura stops him by pointing out that Ming can not fight a man that can't be seen. She convinces her father to leave them in the lab and that, with the help of a guard, she will find some way to overhear their conversation.

Meantime, down in the dungeons, the invisible Flash has released Vultan, by scaring the guards out of their wits. He and Vultan then return to the lab, where Zarkov, Barin and Dale are waiting. United again, the doctor tells them they must prepare their rocket ship for flight to Vultan's sky city and from there to the Earth. However, first the doctor once

again attempts to communicate with the planet Earth. This time Zarkov is successful. He explains to Prof. Gordon that they have very little sending power left, but they are making preparations to take flight from Mongo to return to Earth. The scientists on Earth are elated to find out that Flash is alive and that Zarkov has conquered space. Communication is again lost. Invisible Flash, Vultan and Zarkov load the rocket ship, while Barin and Dale guard the invisibility machine. The invisibility machine must be guarded, because Zarkov has pointed out that if anything happens to it, he doesn't know how he can bring Flash back to visibility. Princess Aura and a fruity-eyed soldier listen to everything from a narrow inner wall beyond the lab. To do this, they use a listening device dropped down the inside wall of the lab, from a small secret opening in the ceiling. Barin spots the device and takes Dale to safety in the catacombs under the palace.

The fruity-eyed soldier reports to Ming and Ming orders a strong body of soldiers to the lab. Just then Aura arrives and tells her father that she will find Dale Arden for him, but he is not to touch the invisibility machine until Flash has again become visible. She leaves and the crafty Emperor instructs Torch to destroy Flash Gordon instantly where ever they find him.

Princess Aura instructs the mistress of the Sacred Tigron to assist her in locating Dale in the myriad of caverns beneath the palace. The Tigron can follow a trail anywhere, so supplying the girl with one of Dale's sandals, so the Tigron can get her scent, they set out upon their search.

Meantime, Zarkov, Vultan and the invisible Flash return to the lab to discover that Dale and Barin have disappeared. As they ponder the fate of their friends, Torch and his soldiers march into the lab demanding to know the whereabouts of Flash Gordon. Flash - "Here I am!" and Torch drops to his knees, fighting the invisible hands that clutch at his throat. Before our eyes, we see Flash become visible, in a very nice piece of trick photography. Apparently the effects of the ray have worn off. Flash throws Torch to the floor and turns to see Prince Barin running into the lab. Barin explains to Flash what he has done with Dale, and leaving Vultan and Zarkov to fight the soldiers, the two leave to fetch her from the cave. In that very same cave, Princess Aura and the other chick, come ever closer to Dale. The Tigron tears loose and bounds down the corridor, followed by the running girl and princess. The Tigron spots Dale and springs upon her, bearing her to the ground. Fade out.

Chapter twelve - "Trapped in the Turret"

As the Tigron bears Dale to the ground, Flash and Barin rush into the cave where the Earthgirl is being mauled. (Which, by some miracle leaves not one scratch on her body.) Flash leaps into the cave, and heroically grapples with the Tigron. The fight is not long, and Flash breaks the cat's neck with a full nelson.

It might be interesting to point out that Flash kills a Tigron in a similar fashion on Sunday page 6-3-34 and Raymond has Flash breaking the neck of a Terrot in this same manner, Dec. 25, 1938.

Flash - "I guess I got here just in time!" Princess Aura watches as Flash and Dale stand in a gentle embrace. Barin steps close to the princess. Barin - "Princess Aura...why did you do this?" Aura - "I'm not accountable to you for my actions, Prince Barin!" Barin - "You do not hope to win the regard of Flash Gordon by destroying the woman he loves! I've won the friendship of the Earth people by helping them...you should do the same!" Aura contemplates the wisdom of Prince Barin's words. She says - "Alright...we'll help them!" Hey...How about this change in character in Aura? After 11 episodes of lusting after Flash's body, she does this about-face and allies herself with Barin to help the Earth people...to win Flash's "regard", as Barin puts it. Oh well...that's women for you. From lust to regard. Incredulous as it seems, Dale and Flash accept this change in Aura's character!

Back at the lab, Torch and his men have taken Zarkov and Vultan prisoner. Torch informs Zarkov that Ming is prepared to overlook the doctor's recent actions if he will divulge the secret of the invisibility machine. Zarkov refuses.

Meantime, Aura assures her friends (?) that she will intercede with her father, the Emperor. They set out for the throne room. As they enter, Ming shouts - "Seize them!" Barin, sword drawn, orders Ming to tell his men to withdraw. He tells Ming that if it wasn't for the love he has for Aura, he would kill him. Ming addressing Aura - "I'm delighted to learn that you look with favor upon Prince Barin! I see no reason why we should not live in peace until such time as the Earth people return to their own sphere!" While Ming is having his forced change of heart, Torch has returned to the lab where he orders the invisibility machine destroyed. Zarkov protests, but to no avail.

Meantime, Barin orders Ming to proclaim the Earth people free at once. He does so and Flash is told he can go to the laboratory and inform Zarkov of his freedom. At the lab, Flash and Dale find Zarkov upset because his invisibility machine has been destroyed. Having been informed by Flash that they're free and confirmed by the guard that escorted Dale and Flash, the soldiers leave Zarkov, Vultan, Flash and Dale alone. (if you can call that alone) Not trusting Ming, our heroes decide to leave for Vultan's sky city as soon as possible. Barin and Aura arrive to inquire if the Earth people are not pleased with their new found freedom. Of course our friends are happy, but skeptical. Barin says he's sure Ming is sincere in his wish to be rid of Flash and the others. Flash - "You're right, there! But it's how he wants to get rid of us that concerns me!" Barin tells them he will prepare his rocket ship for flight at once! Vultan - "Our departure must remain secret!" Barin agrees to meet them with his ship outside the palace walls. The place...the turret house at the lake of rocks. While Barin loads his rocket ship, Ming's spies overhear him telling a companion (who is only here this one moment, so that Barin can be overheard, by someone

(12) Flash and Dale return to the lab where they inform Zarkov and Vultan of their freedom. Torch has just wrecked the invisibility machine.

speaking aloud) where he will meet the others.

Back at the lab, Flash and Zarkov communicate with Prince Thun of the Lionmen, on their space-o-graph. They instruct their bearded friend to meet them at Vultan's palace, but as you will see next episode, he gets lost somewhere on the way, and goes the wrong way.

We now see Barin's rocket ship rise from its resting place and take to the air. Next Flash, Dale, Zarkov, Aura and Vultan emerge from a cave opening into the sea of rocks, which is a large clearing in mountainous country. The ground is covered by boulders, lying here and there...the sea of rocks...clever? Across the rock strewn clearing is the mouth of another cave, in which can be seen steel rivited doors. As our heroes head toward it, they see an approaching rocket ship. Flash says it must be Barin's ship. The ship flies lower and fires upon them. All wonder why Barin would do that. They have no time to ponder the matter, for the ship again fires upon them. They open the doors of the turret house and rush inside. The ship fires again. It's blast hits the doors, and there follows a great explosion. We are left with the impression that our heroes have been blown to smithereens.

Chapter thirteen - "Rocketing to Earth"

The door of the turret house is blown to slivers. Flash asks Aura if there is any other way out of the place. Aura - "Yes...the trap door!" And sure enough, they're standing on a trap door. Talk about lucky - Gol-lee! Our friends just make it in, as another blast destroys the interior of the turret house.

Ming has been watching, on his space-o-graph, and as the last shell explodes in the cave, he turns off his viewscreen and turns to Prince Barin, who is restrained by guards. Ming - "That finishes Flash Gordon and his friends!" Barin - "You murderer!" Ming - "Put him in the dungeon!" and Barin is taken away. Well, at least we know that Prince Barin wasn't in that rocket ship.

King Vultan is slightly injured by the last explosion and Zarkov urges that they get to the lab fast, so he may care for the hawkman properly. On their way to the lab they come upon the guards escourting Barin to the dungeons. Aura - "Why, it's Prince Barin!...A prisoner!" Flash - "So he wasn't in the rocket ship, after all!" They hide and ambush the guards. Flash and Barin make quick work of the soldiers and again Zarkov urges speed in getting Vultan to the lab. A guard, faking unconsciousness, overhears this and as our heroes rush off, gets to his feet and reports to Ming.

Our heroes arrive at the lab. Vultan warns Zarkov, who is draping a cloth on the hawkman's head, to hurry, for Ming is sure to atack them. However, Zarkov is not worried. He notes that he came to the lab for he can find means to defend them here.

Upon receiving the report of our heroes escape, Ming orders that they be captured at once. Torch leads a detachment of soldiers to the lab, but is unable to enter due to Zarkov's wiring of the door. When the door is touched, it is covered with sparks. Ming arrives at the door, followed by more soldiers. After a futile attempt to open the door with a ray-gun, Ming orders a soldier to cut off the power that supplies electric energy to the lab.

In the lab, Zarkov boasts - "We can hold out indefinately!" But...Oh, Oh...the doctor turns his switch on and nothing happens. He realizes the electric energy has been cut off. Outside, Ming commands that the door be destroyed and that the lab's occupants be taken prisoner. Suddenly an alarm siren sounds. Ming - "An air attack!" Ming leaves to return to his throne room to investigate the alarm.

Inside the lab, our heroes rush to the space-o-graph and see an air attack by the gyro ships of the lionmen. I told you Thun would go the wrong way. Lucky break for our friends, huh?

Ming, watching the gyro ships on his throne room space-o-graph orders his fleet out to meet the attack; then he orders a soldier to have the prisoners in the lab brought to the throne room. Without the electricity in the door, this is accomplished quite easily. Aura - "Your Majesty dares to have guards lay hands upon me!" Ming - "You have chosen to consort with traitors... you shall share their fate!" However, Flash points out to Ming that it is his ships that are being shot down from the skies. Ming vows that if he loses, Flash and his friends will never live to see it. Ming - "Take the prisoners to the Tunnel of Terror!" Before this can be done, the doors of the throne room are flung open and the room is filled with ferocious fighting bearded lionmen. Flash and Barin join in the battle. Ming, realizing all is lost, makes his escape down a flight of stone steps beyond the space-o-graph. Flash, Thun and Barin, noticing his escape, take out in pursuit of the escaping monarch of Mongo. They are followed by Princess Aura.

Underground, in a tunnel, we see Ming whispering to the High Priest. The Priest bows, and Ming turns and runs toward massive wooden doors. He stands before the doors, his arms outstretched above his head, as one in prayer. The Priest pushes on a long handle and the doors open, revealing a smoke and mist filled tunnel beyond. (Say...We've seen this place before.) Ming bows his head and walks slowly into the billowing clouds of smoke, as the High Priest watches. Ming, his arms outstretched, starts up a short flight of steps that are barely visible through the smoke. As he disappears into the smoke, the High Priest pulls back on the handle and the doors return to a closed position.

At that selfsame moment, Flash rushes up to the Priest demanding to know where Ming is. High Priest - "The Emperor Ming is dead! The Emperor entered the Sacred Palace of the Great God Tao, from which no man returns!" Aura, who has just joined Flash, Barin and Thun is comforted on the loss of her father, by Barin. Flash says there's nothing more that can be done here, so they all return to the palace.

Later, in the throne room, Princess Aura, dressed in a revealing regal gown, sits in the throne once occupied by her late father. To her side stands her royal consort, Prince Barin. Flash, Dale and Zarkov march up to the throne, while soldiers line the way with their raised swords, amid the sounds of trumpets. A royal salute to the heroes from Earth.

One would think our heroes troubles would be over. Not so, for a short time after Flash, Dale and Zarkov blast off for Earth, it is discovered that the High Priest has placed a bomb aboard their rocket ship. A radio warning from Barin, comes just in time. Flash finds the bomb, resting on the shelf of the ship's generator unit and drops it out of the rocket's door. It explodes hamlessly in space. Back at the ship's radio set, Flash thanks Barin and says - "We're safe and on our way!"

Our heroes, in radio contact with Earth, ask that all electrical power that may counteract theirs be killed. As generators shut down, thousands of people fill the streets to watch for Zarkov's rocket.

In the ship, as they near the cloud cover of Earth, Zarkov exclaims - "Flash...Dale...We've won! We made it! We're about to land!" Zarkov stops...Our young couple do not hear him. Flash takes Dale in his arms and kisses her, in a tender embrace. How 'bout that! After 13 episodes, they finally get to kiss. Oh well!

As for the Flash of the comic page, it will be a few more years before he returns to Earth.

2nd SERIAL

FLASH GORDON'S

Trip to Mars -

by MIKE ROYER and Cosgrove & Greim

The second of the Flash Gordon serials came out in 1938. However, because of a radio broadcast, Flash's adventures took place on Mars rather than on Mongo.

The famous Orson Welles broadcast of "War of the Worlds", that frightened the nation in the fall of 1938, caused great interest in the planet Mars. Universal Pictures capitalized on this Martian interest, by having Flash's adventures take place on Mars.

Universal Pictures Co. Inc. presents..."Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars".

A 15 part serial produced for Universal by Barney Sarecky and directed by Ford Beebe and Robert Hill.

Cast of Characters:

FLASH GORDON - Larry "Buster" Crabbe, DALE ARDEN - Jean Rogers, MING - Charles Middleton, DR. ZARKOV - Frank Shannon, HAPPY HAPGOOD - Donald Kerr, AZURA - Beatrice Roberts, CLAY KING - Montague Shaw (Dr. Huer in Buck Roggers), PRINCE BARIN - Richard Alexander.

List of Chapters:

1. New Worlds to Conquer 2. The Living Dead 3. Queen of Magic 4. Ancient Enemies 5. The Boomerang 6. Tree-Men of Mars 7. Prisoner of Mongo 8. The Black Sapphire of Kalu 9. Symbol of Death 10. Incense of Forgetfulness 11. Human Bait 12. Ming the Merciless 13. The Miracle of Magic 14. A Beast at Bay 15. An Eye For An Eye.

As "Trip to Mars" opens, it picks up the story from where the first serial left off. Flash, Dale and Zarkov are returning to Earth in their rocket, after an exciting adventure on the planet Mongo. Their rocket noses down in an irate farmer's melon patch and from the farmer's complaints, the trio know they have landed in the United States.

It is not long, however, before a new danger threatens. Riding a strange light ray to Earth, two giant headed Martians land on our hapless planet, placing a strange smoking device in the surface of the Earth before dying in the denser atmosphere. Back on Mars, the evil Ming the Merciless, Emperor of the planet Mongo, watches with glee. His new found ally, Queen Azura of Mars, is less than pleased, however, at the death of two of her most loyal soldiers.

The effects of Ming's device are not long in manifesting themselves. Across the screen flashes scene after scene of fire, flood, and disaster. In otherwords, Universal throws in a gob of newsreel clippings of disasters.

At a national conference of scientists, convened by the President, the nation's top brains are unable to agree on the cause or cure for the disasters. Dr. Metz scoffs at the sundry theories and trumpets the doom of all mankind. He also notes the absence of Dr. Zarkov, and inspires reporter Happy Hapgood to seek out Flash and the good doctor. Hapgood meets with success, but receives a frosty welcome from Flash and his friends, who refuse to grant him an interview.

Zarkov has determined that the beams causing the destruction of Earth are emanating from the planet Mongo, and so, once again, our intrepid heroes head for Alex Raymond's mythical planet. In space, not only does Zarkov discover that he has erred by some nine zillion miles, and that the rays are really coming from the red planet Mars, but Flash unearths a stow-away...reporter Happy Hapgood.

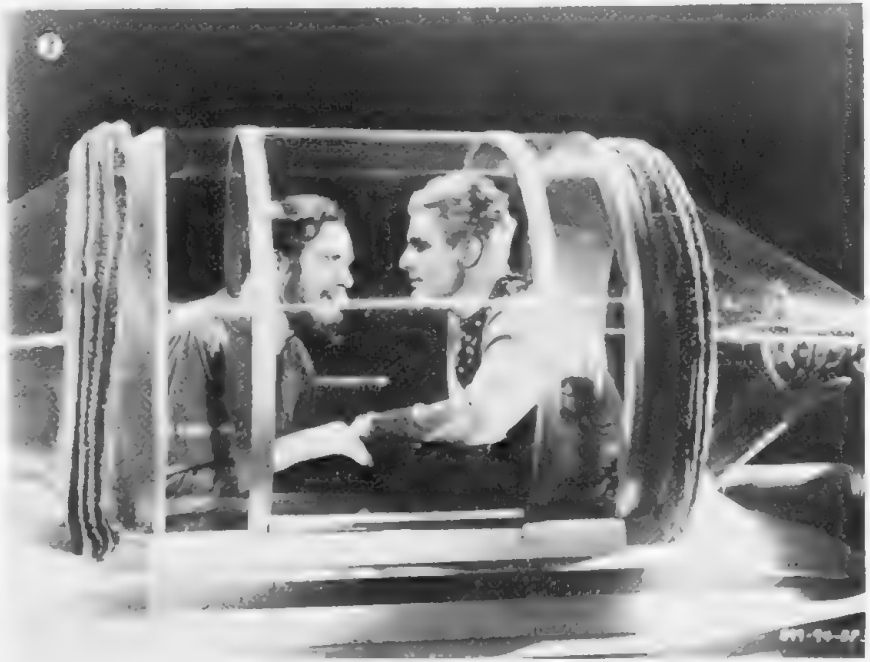
Meanwhile, back at the lab, Ming is working on his lamp, which is causing the cataclysms on Earth by removing the Nitron from the atmosphere. Suddenly an instrument box explodes, spreading flames through the laboratory. Is this the end of Ming the Merciless? Will virtue triumph? Will Universal only hook the kiddies for one chapter of the serial? Not on your life, mister! Ming calmly walks through the flames and turns a handle which stops the fire. Later, the audience learns that the lamp was sabotaged by an ally of the grotesque Clay People. In punishment, Queen Azura uses her magic sapphire to turn him into clay and banishes him to the Clay Kingdom. (Remember this guy. He plays an important part, later in the serial.)

Having changed course for Mars, Flash and his crew discover that their retro-rockets are inoperative, and find themselves inexorably drawn to the surface of the planet Mars. Suddenly, they are hit by the beam from Ming's Nitron Lamp and are thrown into a wild downward spin. Flash and his crew crash land safely in the mountainous Valley of Desolation. Meanwhile, Ming and Azura, suspecting the identity of their adversaries, leave the palace royal in strato-sleds and hasten to confront them. In a short time, they land in the valley. Ming and the soldiers leave the ship to inspect Zarkov's craft, but its occupants have already fled. While they examine the stricken craft, Flash leaves the concealment of the nearby rocks and battles his way into Azura's strato-sled. Azura, having observed Flash on her view-screen, signals Ming with a search light. (It's evening now gang Flash confronts the Martian Queen, who inquires if "All Earthmen are so violent." "Only," Flash explains, "when we have to be." To Flash's amazement, the mistress of magic disappears in the proverbial puff of smoke. Recovering quickly, Flash forces the strato-sled's pilot to take to the air, with Ming and his followers in hot pursuit. Flash lands again, a short distance away, to take Zarkov, Dale and Happy aboard. Then, just as Ming and the soldiers run up, he blasts off again, leaving Ming far below. Ming is panic-stricken because he knows Flash is heading for Azura's city to destroy the Nitron lamp. Ming inexplicably arrives at the city ahead of Flash. No mean feat, since he does not possess Azura's magic an Flash had stolen the strato-sled. Anyway, as Flash approaches, Azura sends up a fleet of strato-sleds tc repel him. To make matters worse, Flash's reluctant pilot has jumped from the ship, gliding to earth on a bat-wing cape. As the strato-sleds close in, Flash discovers a ray-gun aboard the ship. If he can get close enough to the Nitron Lamp, he plans to use the guns two charges to destroy it! With the strato-sle

(1) After returning to Earth, our heroes are ordered out of a U.S. farmer's mellon patch.

(2) Flash fires his pistol out of his rocket's window, bringing down a strato-sled. Fantastic shot, Flash!

(3) Flash and Zarkov travel to Azura's palace via the Clay Men's underground rail-car.



(4) Ming the Merciless communicates with some of his men, via the power house radio.

The King, convinced of Flash's veracity and friendship, frees the hostages and advises the reunited party to seek out the Forest People, to aid them in their fight against Ming. Unfortunately, the Forest People prove to be Ming's allies. They thus launch a savage attack on Flash and his friends. During the battle, Prince Barin arrives like the cavalry in a John Wayne movie to aid Flash in defeating the Tree Men. Flash learns of a magical black sapphire which will counter-act the effects of Azura's white one, and manages to procure it from the Tree Men's temple. However, in the process, Happy is wounded by a Tree Man's dart-gun and they rush to return to the Clay Kingdom. Fortunately, the Clay People are able to cure Happy by placing him in a chamber filled with healing mists.

Leaving Zarkov and Dale to care for the stricken Happy, Flash and Barin set out to capture Azura. They again enter the palace through the Clay People's subterranean rail-tunnel. Using the magic black sapphire, Flash is able to neutralize Azura's magic and takes her prisoner. Flash then sets out to destroy the Nitron Lamp, while Barin returns to the Clay Kingdom with Azura. However, Ming's aid, Tarnak, has witnessed Azura's capture and warns Ming of his nemesis' approach. While Ming looks on, Flash enters the power house and confronts Tarnak. Flash demands to know the location of the Nitron Lamp's controls, telling Tarnak that he intends to turn the lamp off. Tarnak snarls, "Ming will kill you for this!" However, under duress, Tarnak leads Flash to some metal doors: he opens them and he and Flash enter the room. Too late, Flash realizes that he has been tricked, as Tarnak seizes a nearby club and crashes Flash to the floor. Tarnak then imprisons Flash in the room, and activates a special device which fills the room with the ominous crackle of electricity. "Nothing can save Flash Gordon now!" cackles Ming.

But something CAN save Flash now, namely, the ray-gun he had dropped when he was thrown, half-conscious, into the small room to die. Using the gun, Flash blasts his way to freedom. Having momentarily escaped Ming's clutches, Flash returns to Azura's palace. There, from a balcony, he focuses a ray-gun at the Nitron Lamp, destroying it. At that moment, however, Ming and his guards appear to attack Flash, who is soon overwhelmed and taken captive. Tarnak takes the hard-won black sapphire from Flash and places it in a metal box where it can no longer affect Azura. Azura, a captive in the Clay Kingdom, is on the verge of returning the Clay People to normal, when suddenly her powers surge back, and she escapes in a puff of smoke. One might wonder, however, how she intended to transform the Clay People to their former selves without her magical abilities? Ah well.

At any rate, Azura returns to her palace and learns of Flash's capture. Upon confronting Ming, Azura learns that Ming has taken the jewel from Flash. When the box is opened, however, the jewel is missing and Ming immediately summons the captured Flash and accuses him of possessing the jewel. "I don't have it," Flash replies, "but even if I did, I wouldn't reveal its location to you." Ming then proposes to kill Flash, so that no one will know of the jewel's location and Azura's power will be unchallenged. Azura agrees and Flash is locked in a disintegration chamber. After Azura has departed, Ming dispatches a messenger to the leader of the Tree People, telling him that the magic black sapphire is in his possession. Obviously, Ming is planning some sort of treachery.

Meanwhile, Zarkov and Barin have located Flash, but at the same time, are discovered looking down from a skylight in on Flash, by Ming's guards. The guards blast away at them, causing a portion of the roof to give way, precipitating them into the disintegrating chamber, where they attempt to free Flash from the steel chair to which he is chained. Before they can free Flash, however, Zarkov and Barin are struck senseless by the disintegrator ray.

Summoning all his strength, in a last desperate effort, Flash snaps his bonds. Quickly, he revives Barin and Zarkov, and the trio make good their escape through the skylight. After Flash escapes Ming, he heads back to the Clay Kingdom, determined to free the Clay People from their curse. The Clay King is curious as to why Barin, like Flash, has come to Mars. While the film again employs clips from the first serial, Barin explains that Ming is his arch-foe, and that it was on his planet that Ming first tried to kill the Earth people. Barin suggests that they return to the Forest Kingdom to retrieve his rocket ship, but while there, Dale is captured by the Tree Men and placed under the influence of the mists of forgetfulness. Since her memory has now vanished, the high priest easily tricks her into swearing alliegance to the Forest People's god, Kalu. While Barin, Zarkov and Happy wait outside, Flash attempts to rescue Dale, but Dale, under the influence of the sinister priest, stabs her would-be rescuer with a sacrificial dagger.

Hearing the sound of battle, the trio charge in to rescue Flash. Zarkov drives the Tree Men back with a ray-gun, while Barin carries Flash to safety. Meanwhile, Dale is brought before the king of the Tree Men, Turan. Turan orders one of his guards to inform Ming of Dale's capture, and awaits Ming's instructions. Ming orders Dale brought to Azura's palace to bait a trap for Flash. All the guards withdraw from the palace, allowing Flash and Zarkov to enter the trap. When Flash and Zarkov reach the lab, Zarkov attempts to concoct an antidote for Dale's malady, unaware that the chemicals he employs have been tampered with by Ming. Suddenly, Zarkov cries - "There's something wrong Flash!" and hurls the beaker to the floor, just as it explodes.

In what amazing fashion does Flash escape? He doesn't! Both he and Zarkov are knocked to the floor unconscious. Tarnak arrives on the scene and reports to Ming and Azura that Flash Gordon has been captured. This report was a bit premature, as Flash and Zarkov revive and before Ming can reach the scene, they force Tarnak to reveal the location of the antidote to the

(7) Flash instructs Happy to tell Barin and Zarkov that he's located the temple where Dale is being held prisoner.

(8) Dale is forced to breathe Lithium and swear alliegence to the Forest Men's god Kalu

(9) Flash and Queen Azura flee from pursuing strato-sleds.

(11) Flash battles with the captain of the Nitorn Bomber Squad, sent to destroy the Clay People.

(10) Flash leaves his friends with the Clay King, while he goes to fight the Nitron Bomber Squad.

(12) Flash interupts the ceremony proclaiming King Emperor of Mars.

mists of forgetfulness (or Lithium, as it is sometimes called). Quickly, the pair rush to Azura's palace and administer the antidote to Dale, who recovers even as Ming and Azura learn of Flash's escape. Azura, realizing that Flash is back at the palace, disappears in a puff of smoke, leaving Ming at the power house.

Arriving at the palace, Azura comes face to face with Flash, and promptly takes him and his crew prisoner. As she converses with Flash, however, she is once again impressed by his integrity, courage, and body. Before things get too copacetic, enter the emperor Ming, who declares that Flash must die. Azura takes issue with this plan, and heatedly vows to defend Flash with all the magic at her command. At this point, the arch-villain reaches into the folds of his cloak and produces the black sapphire, smiling icily, "What magic?" Ming, however, makes the mistake of turning to order Tarnak to call out the guards, and as he does so, Flash seizes the black sapphire and makes him his prisoner. Activating a light bridge, Flash and his friends, along with the captive Ming and Azura, head towards a strato-sled landing platform. Halfway across, Ming grimaces downward, and jumps, whereupon Flash has occasion to recall the bat-wing glide capes he encountered earlier in the serial. Ming glides safely to earth and hurries back to the palace. There, he commands the Nitron Bombing Squadron to shoot Flash and Azura down, after they have taken off in a strato-sled. Ming fallicously explains to the Nitron Squad, that Azura's magic will protect her from any harm.

Realizing their peril, Flash sets the strato-sled down in the nearby mountains. Flash, Zarkov, Dale and Azura seek cover in the rocks, as rocket shells explode all around them. Just as they reach safety, Azura panics and dashes out into the open, where she is struck down by one of the blasts. Realizing that they have hit their queen, Azura's men cease firing and begin to land their strato-sleds. Zarkov pronounces Azura's condition "very bad," and as the Queen dies in Flash's arms, realizing that Ming has duped her, she gives Flash her magic jewel and instructs him to free the Clay People. Zarkov tastefully places Azura's cape so that it covers her face, as the crew prepares to leave.

When the Clay King learns of Azura's death, he is crestfallen, for he believes that only Azura can lift the curse. His mood soon changes, however, when he learns that Flash possesses the sacred sapphires. Flash joins the black sapphire with the white, in a glass chamber, and as a surge of electricity passes through them, the jewels dissolve and the Clay People stand restored to human form. Now Flash sets out after Ming.

Meanwhile, Ming, now in control of the palace, dispatches a bombing squad, loaded with Nitron, to decimate the Clay Peoples kingdom. Learning of Ming's intentions, Flash takes off in a strato-sled to circumvent the attack. Using his bat-wing cape, Flash drops to the top of the leading bomber. Gaining access to the ship, Flash overpowers the guards, but in the process, sends the ship into a tailspin. Finally, Flash overcomes the pilot and rights the ship. Thus, while Flash pilots his stolen ship to the Clay Kingdom, the remaining three bombers deliver their cargo of Nitron to the Forest People. War between the two kingdoms is now imminent.

At this point, however, an unknown factor upsets the equasion--the pilot of the strato-sled captured by Flash learns that his brother, whom he had thought dead, is alive in the Clay Kingdom. (Remember the guy Azura turned to clay and banished to the caves, at the beginning of the serial?) The brother explains how Ming and Azura, angered by his actions, sentenced him to the living death of clay until he and his comrades were freed by Flash Gordon. So overwhelmed is the pilot, that he tells Flash that he will aid him in attacking Ming. He tells Flash that Ming is having an audience in the palace, and that it may be possible to come within striking distance of him before they are discovered. They set out in a strato-sled to do just that. Meanwhile, at the palace, Ming is having himself proclaimed Monarch of Mars. Flash cleverly eludes Ming's guards, and enters the throne room. Through powerful oratory, he exposes Ming as the cause of Azura's death and turns the populace against Ming. But Ming literally has something up his sleeve...a ray-gun. "Since you rejected me as your ruler, I'll leave you know," says Ming, "and return as your conqueror!" Ming exits via a secret panel with Tarnak. While Flash and the others search for Ming, Ming and Tarnak go to the power house, where they turn the re-built Nitron Lamp on the Earth. As Tarnak watches with mounting horror, Ming gazes through a telescope, viewing scenes of tremendous devastation on Earth, all the while raving that he will destroy the universe. To make matters worse, soldiers loyal to Ming have captured Zarkov, Happy, and the two Martian brothers, and are bringing them to their leader. Unaware of their capture, Flash rushes to the power house to destroy the newly reactivated Nitron Lamp. On the way, he encounters his captured friends and sets them free. As Flash approaches the power house, Tarnak confronts him, but to Flash's surprise, Tarnak declares Ming mad! Unfortunately, Ming sees Flash and company through a nearby window and fires upon them with a ray-rifle. While the others cover him, Flash enters through the power house door. Once inside, Ming attacks him with a ray rifle and manages to capture him. Ming starts to force Flash into the disintegration chamber. Meanwhile, Barin, who has procured a strato-sled, drops a bomb on the power house, which not only destroys the Nitron Lamp, but conveniently knocks Ming to the floor, enabling Flash to grapple with him. As Zarkov and Flash's other friends enter, Flash gains the upper hand and captures Ming. Suddenly, Tarnak seizes a ray-gun! Ming is jubilant! The tables are now turned. Or are they? To Ming's horror, Tarnak not only refuses to carry out his commands, but he forces Ming himself to enter the disintegration chamber. Over the impassioned, but futile protests of Flash, Tarnak flips the switch activating the disintegrating beams. Zarkov succeeds in distracting Tarnak, and Flash capitalizes on the diversion to regain the ray-gun. Quickly, they unlock the chamber, but Ming the Merciless is no more! Well, almost no more. Ming returns, every atom intact, in the next serial.

Flash has completed his mission! After establishing the friendly Clay King as ruler of Mars, he returns to Earth, where a heroe's welcome awaits him. Crowds cheer and sirens wail, as shots of Flash, Dale and Dr. Zarkov are superimposed over shots of a ticker-tape parade in New York.

FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE

3rd SERIAL

written by ROYER & GREIM

UNIVERSAL PICTURES CO. INC. presents.....

FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE!

In 1940 the third and last of the Flash Gordon serials came to the movie screen. Because of the costuming and pagentry, this serial comes the closest to Raymond's later image of Mongo. The characters in this series looked as if they had stepped right out of Alex Raymond's Sunday page. The costuming is some of the most beautiful ever used in a movie serial.

Cast of Characters:

Flash Gordon - Larry "Buster" Crabbe
Dale Arden - Carol Hughes
Dr. Zarkov - Frank Shannon
Emperor Ming - Charles Middleton
Prince Barin - Roland Drew
Sonja - Anne Gwynne

Screenplay by George H. Plympton, Basil Dickey and Barry Shipman.
Directed by Ford Beebe and Ray Taylor.
Associate Producer - Henry MacRae
Art Director - Harold McArthur

From the Alex Raymond newspaper feature owned and copyrighted by King Features Syndicate.

List of the 12 chapters:

The Purple Death - Freezing Torture - Walking Bombs - The Destroying Ray - Palace of Horror - Flaming Death - Land of the Dead - The Fiery Abyss - The Pool of Peril - The Death Mist - Stark Treachery - Doom of the Dictator

Panic sweeps the Earth! People are dying by the thousands, from a strange plague known as "The Purple Death"! A large purple spot on the forehead is the identifying sign of the plague.

Believing the plague is created on another planet, Flash, Dale and Dr. Zarkov rocket into space to find the answer. High above the planet Earth, they encounter one of Ming's ships from Mongo, discharging some dust that disappears as it falls. Realizing this dust is causing the Purple Death, Flash attacks the ship. Flash is winning the battle, when a shot from Ming's ship (commanded by Capt. Torch) disables their ships gun. Flash sends his ship into a dive, making Torch believe he has shot Flash down. Torch then turns his damaged ship back toward Mongo, thinking Flash is dead.

Once out of Torch's sight, Flash pulls his ship out of the dive. Knowing Ming is alive and that he will send other ships to spray the Death Dust on Earth, Flash decides they must return to Mongo and enlist the aid of Prince Barin in overcoming this threat to Earth.

Our heroes arive on Mongo and land in Arboria, the forest kingdom of Prince Barin. Here they are greated by Barin, Aura, Homal (Barin's cousin), and a character not from the comic strip, Hoka. After a brief welcome, Flash is introduced to Queen Fria and Count Korro of Frigia, the ice kingdom, who are also trying to enlist the aid of Barin against Ming. Queen Fria explains that Ming has captured her General Lupi and she wishes Flash and Barin to help in freeing him. They agree and set off, with Count Korro, to attempt Lupi's release and to destroy Ming's laboratory where the Death Dust is made.

In the meantime, Morg, Ming's chief scientist, has found a way to refine the Death Dust, so that it only affects humans with enough intelligence to think for themselves. In this way, Ming will have slaves to rule, when he conquers the Universe. To prove the effects of the Death Dust to Ming, Morg is about to expose General Lupi and a giant of low intelligence, to the Death Dust. At this moment, Flash breaks into the lab, just in time to prevent the experiment.

Zarkov sets about planting an explosive to destroy the lab machinery, while Flash and his men cover Ming and his soldiers. Suddenly, Morg jumps at Flash and the lab is filled with battle. As Flash and his friends battle Ming's soldiers, Ming and Torch exit the lab to safety. As Ming exits, he screams - "Kill them! Kill them!" At this point, Zarkov's bomb explodes, destroying the lab machinery. Flash and Morg grapple near the edge of a deep pit, off to the side of the lab. Finally, both men topple into it! In a desperate effort to save himself, Flash grabs a metal bar projecting from the side of the pit, as Morg falls to his death below. Zarkov comes to Flash's aid and lowers a chain, that hangs near the pit, down to him and hauls him up to safety.

While Flash and his friends escape, Ming orders out the Emperial Guard! Ming - "One hundred thousand Mingols to the man who captures them alive!" Ming now makes two observations. First, Zarkov was clever enough to strike at his lab and the energy pit, which is the source of the Death Dust. (This was the pit that Flash and Morg fell into.) Although not completely destroyed, it has delayed Ming's conquest of the Universe. Secondly, Flash must have made a pact with Queen Fria to mine Polorite, the only antidote to the Death Dust. An antidote that can only be found in the frozen waste lands of Frigia.

Meanwhile, Flash, Zarkov and the others have reached their rocket ship and are now being pursued by a squadron of Ming's ships. Just as the ships close in for the kill, Zarkov pulls a lever on his ships control panel. Zarkov's ship suddenly becomes invisible. Safe from detection, our heroes return to Arboria in safety.

Queen Fria is so grateful to Flash for saving General Lupi, that she gives his permission to mine Polorite in Frigia. While they plan an expedition to Frigia, they are overheard by Sonja, who thinks to herself - "Ming will learn of this!"

Flash and Zarkov lead an expedition into Frigia; protected from the cold, only a Frigian can stand, by a spray devised by Dr. Zarkov. Leaving the ship, Flash, Dale, Barin, Hoka and one of the miners begin to climb a huge snow covered mountain in search of the Polorite. They are spotted by a Ming ship, commanded by Capt. Torch, that has been sent to destroy them. The ship drops a bomb that misses, but starts an avalanche. Our heroes are swept away by tons of snow, but miraculously survive at the bottom of a crevasse. They are soon rescued by Dr. Zarkov, after he drives the Ming ship away with his rocket. The mining of the Polorite begins, and Flash radios the news back to his father (Prof. Gordon) on Earth. The radio message is intercepted by Ming. Enraged, and knowing his soldiers cannot withstand the intense Frigian cold, Ming sends Capt. Torch against the expedition with an army of

mechanical men called Annihilations, charged with explosives. Torch is able to control and explode the robots from the safety of his ship. Deep in the frozen wastes, the exploding bombs attack the expedition! Flash and the others battle the Annihilations to no avail. Finally, Flash is knocked unconscious, when Torch explodes one of the robot men. Torch then has a robot man bring Dale to his ship. Zarkov and Honal try to stop the Annihilations, but Honal is knocked out and Zarkov is taken prisoner. Torch, believing Flash was killed when he exploded the Annihilation, decides to take Dale and Zarkov to Ming, then return for Zarkov's rocket. After they have taken off, Flash regains consciousness and returns to Zarkov's ship. After being told of what has happened to Dale and Zarkov, Flash refuses to follow them. He tells the others, that his first duty is to get the Polorite to Earth, to stop the Purple Death. "I've got to take the Polorite to Earth first", says Flash. "Then I'll come back and settle with Ming!"

Flash rockets to Earth with the Polorite and tells his father, via radio, that he's going to drop it on Mt. McKinley. Once this is done, all the Death Dust will be attracted to the Polorite and be destroyed. Flash accomplishes this, then tells his father that he's returning to Congo to free Dale and Zarkov. Flash no sooner arrives on Congo when he and Aura encounter Torch returning to Prisia to pick up Zarkov's rocket. Torch, amazed to see the very craft he sends in flight, attacks. Flash, with the use of a smoke screen, tricks Torch into believing he has shot them down. When Torch enters, what he believes to be a stricken ship, he is captured by Flash. Flash then forces the Ming ship's crew to fly them to Ming's palace, hoping to rescue Dale and Zarkov. There, disguised as Ming guards, Flash and Aura make their way through palace corridors. Overhearing a guard say that Zarkov is about to meet his death in the arena, for refusing to aid Ming, Flash rushes up the stairs leading to the arena. Through a window, he sees Zarkov manacled between two stone pillars. As Ming's voice starts the death ray toward Zarkov, Flash leaps through the window and, with sword in hand, tries to cut Zarkov free. Ming, from a balcony, restrains his guards from firing on Flash, saying - "He has chosen his own death!" As the ray engulfs Flash, Aura appears at the window Flash came through. Zarkov sees him and orders him to fire his ray gun at the clock controlling the death ray. He does this and the clock blows up, the death ray stops. Before Ming and his men can recover from this shock, Aura and Flash escape through a door. Dale, who was watching all this with Ming, is escourted away to her quarters and Zarkov is ordered brought to Ming in the throne room.

Ming tells Zarkov he will let him live, but he will have to work, with other scientists in his laboratory, to aid him in conquering the Universe. Zarkov is taken to Ming's laboratory, where he meets Khom, another scientist forced to serve Ming. Zarkov and Khom make a pact to do all in their power to destroy Ming.

Meanwhile, Flash and Aura have appropriated two Ming guard uniforms and have rescued Dale. Using a radio-phone, they also appropriated from Ming's guards, Flash gets in contact with Zarkov in the laboratory. Flash tells Zarkov he won't leave without him. Khom gives Zarkov a means of escape...a monks robe. After telling Flash he'll meet him in the courtyard, where the rockets are, Zarkov dons the robe and simply walks by Ming's guards. What security! What a stupid escape! Oh well, back to the action...
The approach of a fleet of Barin's rocket ships creates a diversion and our heroes escape. However, Barin, not knowing Flash is aboard the Ming ship, orders it shot down.

Zarkov has learned from Khom that Ming is preparing another terrible weapon to destroy the world; so after returning to Barin's palace, he tries to find a way to combat it! And none too soon, for back at Ming's palace, Ming is inspecting this new weapon...a fire projectile. This projectile, when it hits its target, bursts into intensive flame, capable of destroying large areas. Ming plans to test the projectiles on the barren regions of Arboria, before directing them at Earth. He chooses the barren areas to show Prince Barin his power and to make him realize what would happen should he direct a projectile at the heart of Arboria. To make sure no harm comes to his daughter, Princess Aura (Barin's wife), Ming arranges, through her attendant Lady Sonja, to have her abducted. After this has been accomplished, he fires the projectiles.

To defeat Ming's purpose, Flash takes off with Dale and Honal, in a ship equiped with Zarkov's untested Thermal Control...a device constructed to combat Ming's fiendish invention. Zarkov's invention consists of a large pointed object that is to be stuck in the ground, in the center of the flames and a control unit to operate it aboard the ship. Dale and Honal, operating the controls from the ship, watch Flash, in a fire-proof uniform, fighting his way into the raging inferno as the first projectile falls. The Thermal Control resists the fantastic temperature, but suddenly the intense heat melts a connection. The control fails and Flash is engulfed in flames! Fortunately for Flash, Honal and Dale replace the connection and get the machine working before he is burned to death. The flames now extinguished, Flash radios Arboria to report to Dr. Zarkov. His conversation is cut short, however, when a Ming bomber, with Torch in command, starts bombing the palace. Torch is soon attacked by two of Barin's ships and is thought destroyed, when he sends his ship into a dive. When Barin's ships leave, Torch lands and he and Sonja leave to spy on Prince Barin. Ming's attack on Arboria causes Zarkov to perfect an X-Ray to be discharged from a powerful Nullitron. When used, it will neutralize and render useless Ming's power plant, leaving him open to attack. Barin tells Flash, who has returned from his mission against the flame projectiles, that the Nullitron can best be used against Ming's palace from the Devil's Dome, a high expanse of rock in the Land of the Dead. Torch and Sonja, who have been spying on Barin, learn of this and report to Ming. Ming orders Torch to plant a powerful time-bomb on the Devil's Dome. He does this, but is promptly overcome and captured by Rock Men, a race of people long thought dead. Flash and his friends arrive by rocket, unaware of the bomb and the Rock Men. As they begin to set up their equipment, the Rock Men attack. The battle is brief, for the time-bomb Torch planted earlier goes off. Our heroes are rendered unconscious and are taken prisoner by the Rock Men. The Rock Men carry Flash and his friends to a nearby rock ledge. A Rock Man then punches a rock on the side of the cliff and reviving vapors drift from the cracks in the ground and revive our heroes. The Rock Men speak to our heroes in a language Zarkov recognizes as one spoken by an ancient tribe of the Gobbi Desert on Earth. All of

(1) Flash radios his father that he's discovered a cure for the Purple Death....Perfect.

GRAY MORROW

the prisoners are brought before the Rock King, who orders them held until his missing son is returned to him. The king blames the prisoners for his disappearance.

Dale, in a cell with Sonja, tries to get help by calling Khom via a small radio she had hidden on her. Sonja sees this and attacks Dale. They fight, causing the Rock Men guards to come in and seperate them. Sonja is taken out and put in a seperate cell, taking with her Dale's radio. Once Sonja is alone, she turns the radio on and Khom is revealed to Ming as Flash and Zarkov's ally.

Meanwhile, Flash, Zarkov and Roka have decided on a means of escape. Roka pretends he is ill and when the Rock Men guards enter their cell he holds them at bay, while Flash and Zarkov escape. The duo make good their bid for freedom and head back to their rocket for help. On their way, they encounter a tremendous magnetic force, caused by a huge lodestone that had been uncovered by the time-bomb explosion earlier. Clinging to a nearby rock, to avoid being pulled over a chasm ledge where the lodestone is, is the Rock King's son. Flash hits upon an idea to save the boy. He plans to push a boulder down on the lodestone knocking it into the depths of the chasm. However, to do this he must climb dangerously near the chasm's edge and risk being pulled to his death by the lodestone. To make matters worse, the Rock King has ordered the prisoners thrown into a boiling abyss. One of Torch's men perish and Dale is to be next. As Dale is lowered into the abyss, Roka attack and for a moment Dale is free. However, she is recaptured and returned to the abyss. Just as she is about to be thrown in, Zarkov and Flash appear, successful in their mission to save the Rock King's son. In gratitude for what Flash has done, they are all set free. It is at this moment that Sonja, Torch and one of his men make a break for freedom. They try to escape via the rocket in which Barin and Ronal are waiting for Flash to return from setting up the Nullitron. However, before they can do this, Flash, with the aid of some Rock Men, recapture the trio. Now, with everyone safely aboard Barin's rocket, they leave the Land of the Dead.

Instead of returning to Arboria, a rescue mission to release Princess Aura is undertaken. They manage to get in contact with Aura and Capt. Sudin (Capt. of the Palace Guard loyal to Barin) via Khom's secret radio. Sudin is instructed to open the entrance door of an underground tunnel leading to the palace, at 6.30 that evening. Sudin does so, and our heroes gain entrance. As they move along the tunnel, they meet and come to grips with, a detachment of Ming's guards. One guard sounds an alarm that brings Ming to the control room. He sees the battle on a view screen and orders Capt. Sudin to open the flood gates. Sudin does so, and torrents of water sweep our heroes to their doom. However, unnoticed by Ming, Sudin opens the gates to a side tunnel and Flash and his party are saved. Realizing they can not accomplish their mission at this time, Flash and his friends return to Arboria.

Later, Ming and his guards catch Aura and Khom trying to send a message over the radio hidden in the lab. Khom tries to strangle Ming and is killed. Ming learns Flash is alive, when communication with Khom is attempted over the radio by Zarkov. Ming has one of his guards imitate Khom's voice, so Zarkov won't learn of Khom's death and discovery of the radio. The ruse works.

A short time later, Sonja and Torch, confined in prison cells in Barin's palace, escape to the radio room. There they overpower the operator and communicate with Ming. Ming instructs Torch to send out a false order, grounding Barin's space ships. This will clear the way for Ming's bombers. Torch does this, then destroys the radio, to prevent Barin from countermanding the orders. Dale overhears all this and is captured by Torch and Sonja who flee with her to the roof of the palace. Learning of this, Flash pursues and corners them. Flash and Torch lock in battle as the Ming bombers begin their attack. Dale, Sonja and Ronal, who has just joined them on the roof, are overcome by the gas emanating from the bomb blasts. Flash and Torch, in the meantime, have battled near the edge of the roof, where their desperate struggle causes them to fall off. They plunge downward into the palace moat. Flash looks around him and sees Torch floating unconscious nearby. He proceeds to pull Torch from the moat, as, up above, a Ming bomber lands on the palace roof. Ming's men leave the rocket and return, a few moments later, with the unconscious Dale, Sonja and Ronal. The ship takes off again, with only seconds to spare, as Barin's ships appear on the scene to beat off the Ming ships. The ship carrying Dale, Sonja and Ronal escapes Barin's forces and returns to the palace of Ming.

Crafty Ming, wanting the return of Capt. Torch, who is still held prisoner by Flash, devises a treacherous plan. He contacts Flash and Barin and proposes an exchange....Dale Arden and Ronal for Capt. Torch. The trade is made, but as Flash rockets away Dale passes out. A note from Ming, placed in Ronal's belt before the exchange, explains what has happened. Dale has been given a drug that will soon kill her if she and Dr. Zarkov are not returned to Ming's power at once. Zarkov has no choice...he must submit!

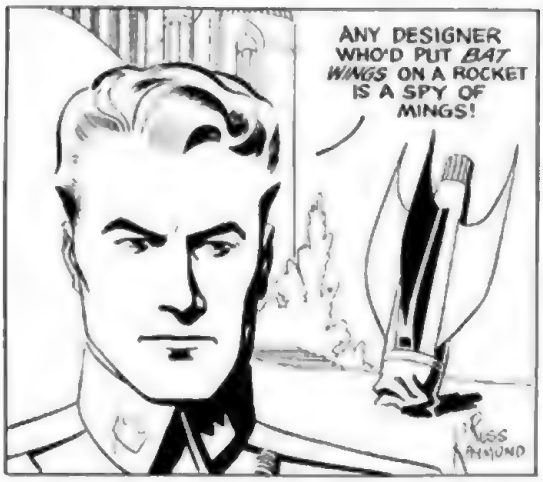
With Dale, Aura and Zarkov held captive, Ming now has power over Flash and Barin. Desperate, Flash leads a rescue party into Ming's palace, via an abandoned tunnel and soon locates the room where Dale and Aura are being held. However, Flash is unaware that the room is protected by a death dealing electrical trap, set by Ming! Flash, with sword in hand, starts to enter the room. Dale screams a warning and Flash only receives a partial electric shock. Barin finds the controls and turns off the electric current. After Flash revives, he, Dale, Aura, Barin and Roka head for Ming's lab where Zarkov is held prisoner. They battle their way into the lab and seal its entrance. Now in

"DON'T WORRY, DALE--EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALRIGHT! IT'S MY ONLY CHANCE TO SAVE YOU AND ZARKOV AND THE OTHERS IN MING'S POWER--AND I'VE GOT TO TAKE IT!"

(2) Flash battles an Annihilation to save Dale.
(4) Zarkov, Flash, Dale and Barin check the Nullitron gun.

(3) Flash isn't making out too well.
(5) Flash, Dale, Zarkov and Roka captured by Rock Men.

⑥ Dale and Aura are told about the electronic death trap by Ming
⑦ Roka, Barin and Flash on their way to free Dale, Aura and Zarkov.



control of the laboratory, Zarkov discovers the source of King's power...Thilinium! Thilinium, powered by rays from the sun, energizes all of King's weapons. With this power in Zarkov's hands, he holds King at bay.

Meanwhile, King has the laboratory surrounded by his soldiers and gives Flash and his friends one hour to surrender. He also tells Zarkov that he has a power other than Thilinium at his disposal. Flash and Roka, using the uniforms of the guards they clobbered breaking into the lab, slip out through a secret tunnel to spy on King. They get close enough to the throne room to learn what the other source of King's power is. A rocket ship loaded with Solarite, a tremendously powerful explosive King had planned to use on the cities of Earth.

Flash and Roka have no sooner returned to Zarkov with this information, when King calls the lab on the visa-phone. King tells Zarkov if he doesn't surrender, he'll send a ship of Solarite against the Earth and destroy it. Zarkov stalls King by saying he must discuss the matter with his friends. King gives him five minutes.

Five minutes is all Flash needs. While Zarkov and the others slip out of the lab, via the secret tunnel, and escape in Barin's rocket, Flash takes over the ship filled with Solarite. Learning of this, a panicked King flees to his tower laboratory with Torch and Sonja. From this tower lab, King plans to use the tower's auxiliary controlls to detonate the Solarite before it can be used against him. King calls to his control room, to have the auxiliary controlls activated. There is no reply. Capt. Sudin, loyal to Barin, is in charge. Sudin radios King's location to Flash, at the same time electronically locking King's tower door. He then makes a statement to another guard, loyal to Barin, that is with him. "I never thought it would be in my power to destroy King!" He also tells the other guard that there is another way out of the tower, but King will never think of it in time. This statement would lead one to believe the script writers were leaving the door open for a fourth serial, by giving King a means of escape. However, the fourth serial never took place.

Meanwhile, Flash heads the Solarite ship at the tower. King sees the ship and tries to escape through the door, only to find it locked! Flash parachutes out of the ship and moments later King, Torch and Sonja are blown to pieces!

After being reunited with his friends, Flash is told by Barin that by destroying King he has saved the Universe. Flash replies - "In his mad ambition, King declared that he was the Universe." Zarkov ends the adventure by saying - "Then since you've conquered King, I shall radio your father - FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE!"

EDITOR'S NOTES:

I'd like to use this remaining space to relate a few facts pertaining to the serials and other Flash Gordon material.

The Flash Gordon serials are movie film classics. Perhaps the dialogue sounds "corny" by today's standards, but keep in mind these serials were made well over 30 years ago. They are, without a doubt, the best movie serials ever made.

The Flash Gordon serials were also made into feature versions and have been released for TV showings as well. The first serial was renamed "Space Soldiers". The second had two names, "Mars Attacks the World" and "Space Soldiers Trip to Mars". The third was retitled, "Space Soldiers Conquer the Universe".

SAMPLES DRAWN FOR AN AD AGENCY PLANNING A CAMPAIGN FOR AMVER, SATYRIZING FLASH GORDON

In the last serial, there were two major cast changes. Richard Alexander (Prince Barin) was replaced by Roland Drew and Carol Hughes took the place of Jean Rogers, as Dale Arden.

Although "Conquers the Universe" based its costumes, characters and locations upon the newspaper strip, it had little to do with Raymond's story line. However, it was a much more fitting sequel to the first serial.

Although the people in charge at Universal tried to keep accidents at a minimum, some hair raising ones did take place. Buster Crabbe was forced through some broken glass in a shattered swimming pool and into a tank, in one instance and became badly lacerated in another. Jean Rogers, Dale Arden in the first two serials, was almost drowned in one sequence; while Priscilla Lawson, who played Princess Aura in the first serial, came in contact with an electronic machine, with a wet hand and received quite a jolt. It was because of accidents like these, that doubles were used in many of the dangerous sequences. This protected the producers of the film from being held up on production, plus a good deal of added expense.

FRIENDS OF FLASH GORDON

FRIENDS OF FLASH GORDON is the getting together of some Flash Gordon fans to discuss various aspects of the Flash Gordon strip. Flash's friends, for this panel, are:

MIKE ROYER - JOE SINNOTT - TONY ISABELLA and myself - MARTIN L. GREIM.

Tony's replies, to the questions I asked, were submitted in the form of a short article. I felt it best not to break up this article, so Tony's comments will appear as one statement at the end of this discussion.

The first question is:

"Besides Flash Gordon, what character in the Flash Gordon strip do you most enjoy and why?"

MIKE ROYER - That has to be Ming, the Merciless, Emperor of the Universe. I don't really know if I can find a real reason for liking him, but there's something so nasty about the character to make him appeal to me. He's the perfect villian, as far as I'm concerned. I'm only sorry that he never returned to Raymond's pages when the artist returned the strips locale to the planet Mongo.

How about the character that appeals to me the least? For instance...Kang! God, what a waste! Oh well...

JOE SINNOTT - I always liked Prince Barin, probably because Raymond patterned him after Errol Flynn, a particular favorite of all boys of 12 in 1938. This was the time of the Robin Hood movie also. I'm sure Raymond was influenced by it.

MARTIN GREIM - Vultan, king of the Hawkmen, is my personal favorite. This character and the world he ruled, has to rank as one of the most imaginative of Raymond's creations. Sheldon (Shelly) Moldoff, DC's Hawkman artist of the 40's, must have thought so too. He swiped many, many shots from the Hawkmen series, as well as from the other Flash Gordon stories.

Question #2:

"What Flash Gordon story is your favorite and why?"

MIKE ROYER - That's a tough question. Sentiment plays a big part in my picking the period of June 1940 through July 1941. As you'll read later, it's the first Flash I ever saw and I reread it a thousand times. This period is titled "The prisons of Mongo", by Larry Ivey. However, there's moe to it than the prisons... the Powermen, rocket bombers, secret police, the overthrow of Ming and declaration of Free Mongo, etc.

JOE SINNOTT - My reasons for picking Barin as my favorite character would also have to apply for my pick of favorite story. The "Forest Kingdom" series, I also feel was Raymond's best artistic achievement. The Ice Kingdom story was also great.

MARTIN GREIM - I'd have to say "The Tyrant of Mongo" story is my favorite. This story had the famous dueling sequence between Flash and Ming, Ming's capture and escape, plus Sonja getting her just reward for helping Ming. (She was executed) This series was fast paced and filled with suspense. Flash almost had Ming here!

Question #3:

"How would you compare Flash's second trip to Mongo to his first?"

MIKE ROYER - Raymond was instructed by the syndicate to clean things up on Mongo and return Flash, Dale and Zarkov to Earth. It seemed Flash should do his bit towards combating the enemies of democracy, as in his case, The Red Sword and his Invaders. In appearance they were German, however their salute was the Communist clenched fist and the Nazi outstretched arm. In January, 1941, Flash returns to Mongo to obtain radium to aid the U.S. war effort. Realistically, when the U.S. did go to war against Nazi Germany, the strip couldn't have Flash fight the German's with Zarkov's knowledge of rockets and death-rays, etc - so Flash had to be returned to Mongo. The way the story goes, Raymond was furious that the syndicate told him what to do with his creation, so after liberating Mongo and returning Flash to Earth, he became disenchanted. Raymond stopped writing and only polished up stories the syndicate contracted for him. Although the art from Jan '41 on 'till the end of Raymond's work on Flash Gordon is handsome and well executed, it doesn't "feel" as well as the prewar output. So, my answer to your question must be that I much prefer Flash's 1st visit to Mongo. The 2nd visit looks nice, but doesn't hold a candle in comparison. Oh...where'd I get that stuff about Raymond and the writing? Like they say in the movies, "From a very reliable source".

JOE SINNOTT - I feel Flash's second trip couldn't compare with the first. Mainly because the element of surprise was lost. I also feel his work after 1940 was never the same.

MARTIN GREIM - I'd have to say his first trip too. However, I believe his second trip mirrored the times more. The battles were tactically waged, like those in real life, rather than romantically, with Flash overcoming great obstacles single handedly.

Question #4:

"Besides Raymond, what other artist on the Flash Gordon strip have you enjoyed the most?"

MIKE ROYER - Enjoy is a difficult word. Next to Alex Raymond, the artist who most kept the real "feeling" of Flash and Mongo, was Austin Briggs. It's obvious that Briggs was only doing it for the money, and page after page of his Flash stand as examples of a man drawing as little as he possibly can. Yet, there's something about them. Damn it...I look at some of those simple pages and they're beautiful. For me, Briggs somehow feels right. Also his daily strips shouldn't be forgotten. Although the stories are as silly as those written for the Sundays, it's still the "real" Flash, graphically.

JOE SINNOTT - After Raymond, it's hard to compare. However, Briggs, Barry and Williamson certainly have done excellent work with Flash. I can't appreciate the style that is being used today. What a job Williamson would do with a Sunday page.

MARTIN GREIM - Austin Briggs and Al Williamson certainly captured the Raymond flavor and in this area they are my favorites. However, for the other world of Flash Gordon, the more science fiction world, Mac Raboy had a certain look that I really enjoyed. However, I and a legion of Flash Gordon fans, would love to see Al Williamson do the Flash Gordon Sunday pages. He's Alex Raymond reincarnated.

Question #5:

"In story line, how would you compare Flash Gordon

with Buck Rogers?"

MIKE ROYER - You know, it's funny...as a kid, and even now, I've never considered Flash and Buck in the same league. Of course, when you look back at the strips of 1949 on through to around 1958, I'd take Buck over Flash any day for drawing that appeals to me. Don't misunderstand me...I love the Buck Rogers Sunday strip, but it just wasn't the same kind of feeling I had for Flash. I could get totally involved in Raymond's worlds.

JOE SINNOTT - I never read Buck Rogers very much, so I can't compare their story lines. I can't see how Flash could be equaled however - Raymond was such a great story teller.

MARTIN GREIM - I could never really get interested in Buck Rogers, except when Murphy Anderson drew him. As Mike said, "You get totally involved in Raymond's worlds" and I just couldn't do that with Buck.

Question #6:
"At what point in the Flash Gordon story line did you enjoy Raymond's art the most?"

MIKE ROYER - The evolution of his draftsmanship of April 1937 through July 1938. But I dig it all! The first couple of years were his best as a "comic" artist. Late '38 through '40 were probably his best for overall detail, '40 and '41 were, I believe, his most comfortable as a stylist. It's interesting to note that Hal Foster joined King Features Syndicate in 1937 (Feb.) and in Feb - '38 Prince Valiant is syndicated Nation wide in the same Puck comic section with Flash Gordon. Notice what period Raymond eliminates baloons for straight narrative and refines his work to super draftsmanship? That's right...1937 - 1938. Influence? Competition?

JOE SINNOTT - I liked the Raymond art of '36 - '40.

MARTIN GREIM - The 1940 - 1941 period. From "Tyrant of Mongo" into "The Ice World of Mongo" is how I picture Flash. Raymond at this point, showed great draftsmanship. His later work just didn't have the detail his work at this period contained.

Question #7:
"In closing, expound on anything related to Flash Gordon that you'd care to."

MIKE ROYER - For me, Flash Gordon came into existance one cold rainy Oregon evening in the early fall of 1950. I was thumbing through the comic books, on the rack at our families regular grocery store. I came upon Harvey's Flash Gordon No. 1. I had no prior exposure to the wonderful worlds created by Alex Raymond. In fact, it wasn't until two years later, while digging in a trunk in that fabulous repository of treasures, my grandmother's attic, that I even became aware that the Flash Gordon of Harvey Comics had pre-existed on the colored Sunday comic page, and that its creator had a name at all. Resting at the bottom of the trunk, where my mother had placed them as a girl, I discovered there was much more to Flash Gordon than 4 eye-worn Harvey Comics. A question of my own now - Why didn't the writers of the strip use Ming again, after Flash was returned to Mongo? Let's face it...Raymond never said Ming was dead...just paralyzed...oh well.

JOE SINNOTT - You can't realize what a thrill it was to be a kid of 8 when many of these great strips started in 1934 - Flash, Terry, etc. You wouldn't believe how we waited for the Sunday page. It was great anticipation, as these adventures were all new and quite believable to a boy growing up with them. It was a great period to be a kid!

MARTIN GREIM - Flash Gordon began for me as a short feature in King Comics and one Harvey comic, I had as a boy. Through the years, I saved certain comics and Flash Gordon was one of them. It was Al Williamson's first King Comic that reawakened my interest in Flash. I had been involved with super heroes for so long, that I had almost forgotten how great Raymond's worlds were. However, as you can see by this issue, my love for Flash Gordon didn't stay dormant long.

TONY ISABELLA

Flash & Dale & Tony & Azura
by Tony Isabella

The world is full of roobs. I know. I work for a newspaper. Most papers are produced for roobs by roobs. Especially those newspaper "funnies." The roob comics page reader reads Li'l Abner for the radical new insights it offers. When he wants realism, he reads Mary Worth and believes matchmaking is the key to happiness. He thinks Nancy is outrageously funny and that Pogo is a strip for the "little kiddies." He's the man who invariably gets elected to public office by thousands like him. Help!

The roob doesn't appreciate Flash Gordon. The roob can't get into a world totally unlike his. He can't appreciate the building of an existence totally unlike his. High adventure to the roob is watching Matt Dillon shoot an unarmed drunk. Fortunately, none of we who gather here are roobs. We can discuss Flash Gordon and the amazing world Alex Raymond created for us. The roobs are watching Hee Haw in the next room.

Woody Gelman started it for me. He came out with that fantastically beautiful Flash Gordon volume, page after page of exciting enchantment. I was hooked. I bummed comic book reprints of Flash Gordon newspaper strips. I sat enraptured, while viewing the three Flash Gordon - Buster Crabbe serials. My feet were solidly planted. I watched four chapters of Buck Rogers, before realizing the thing did not take place on Mongo. I saw Hawkmen where they weren't and thoroughly enjoyed the illusion. I begged Big Little Books from a generous collector, to fill the gaps of my reading. Mongo might not be the best of all possible worlds but it's better than fighting with city editors.

Flash Gordon dominates the Flash Gordon strip. He is Alex Raymond's central mover and that's as it should be. But, it is to Raymond's credit that he was able to populate the strip with other well-developed and interesting characters. Dale, Zarkov, and Ming are stereotypes carried beyond the limits of that sterotyping and made to breathe a special realism into the strip. Nor did Raymond cheat on supporting characters like Vultan and Gundar. Each has a realism of his own. Even bit players, like Captain Solis and Major Darin (both in the Nostalgia Press book), have a nobility and reality that few leading characters had. My favorite character Discounting Flash, it would have to be Azura the Witch Queen. Gundar, Vultan and Major Darin follow closely, but I have this fetish for beautiful sorceresses. They contain an earthiness within a mystic aura and that's a hard combination to ignore.

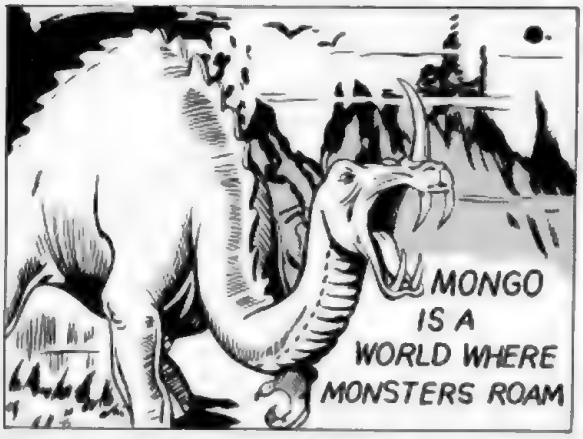
Flash Gordon (by Alex Raymond) is possibly the greatest comic strip adventure ever recorded. But one episode in the run of the strip stands out from the

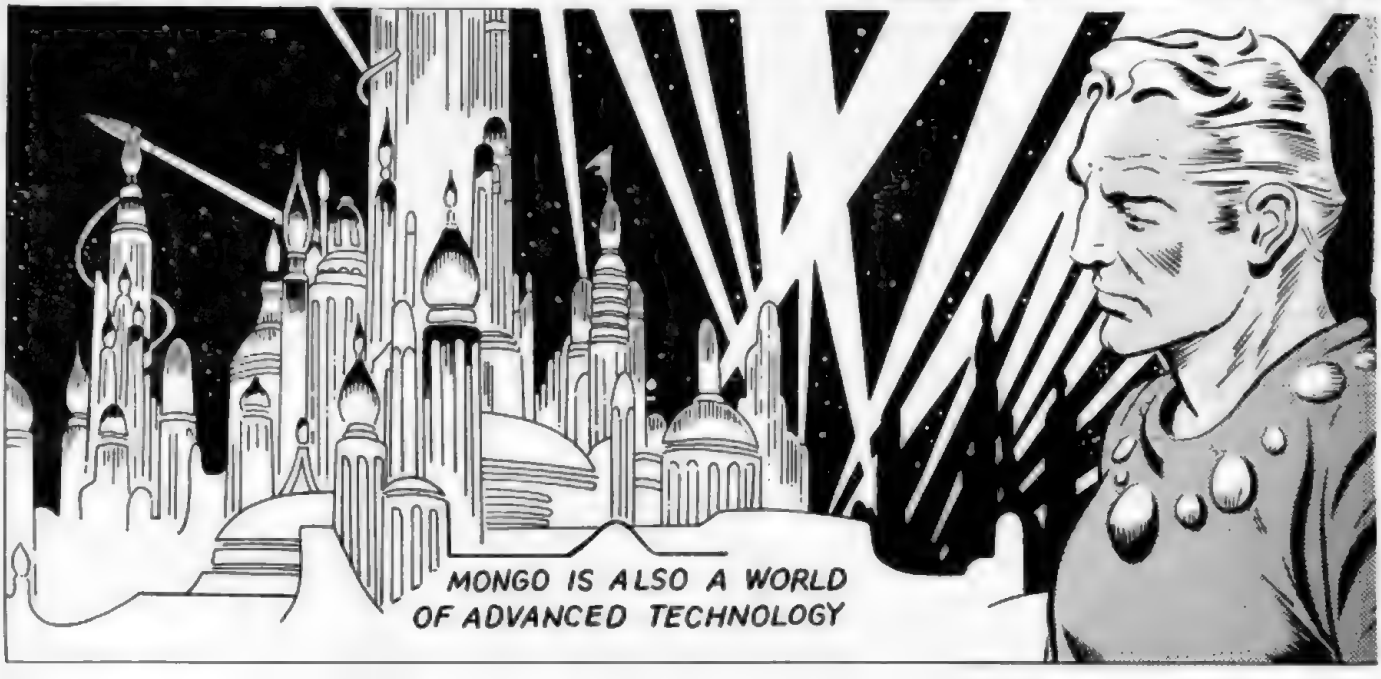
(CONTINUED ON LAST PAGE)

FLASH GORDON

SINCE ITS BEGINNING IN 1934, THE FLASH GORDON STRIP INTRODUCED MANY FASCINATING PEOPLE AND PLACES. MONGO IS A WORLD OF MANY RACES, RANGING FROM THE PRIMITIVE TO THE SUPER SCIENTIFIC. RANGED WITH TOWERING MOUNTAINS, AREAS OF VOLCANIC ACTIVITY AND LUSH VEGETATION OF GIGANTIC PROPORTIONS, HUGE REPTILES STILL WALK THE LAND.

THE FOLLOWING IS A BRIEF LOOK AT THE PLANET MONGO!

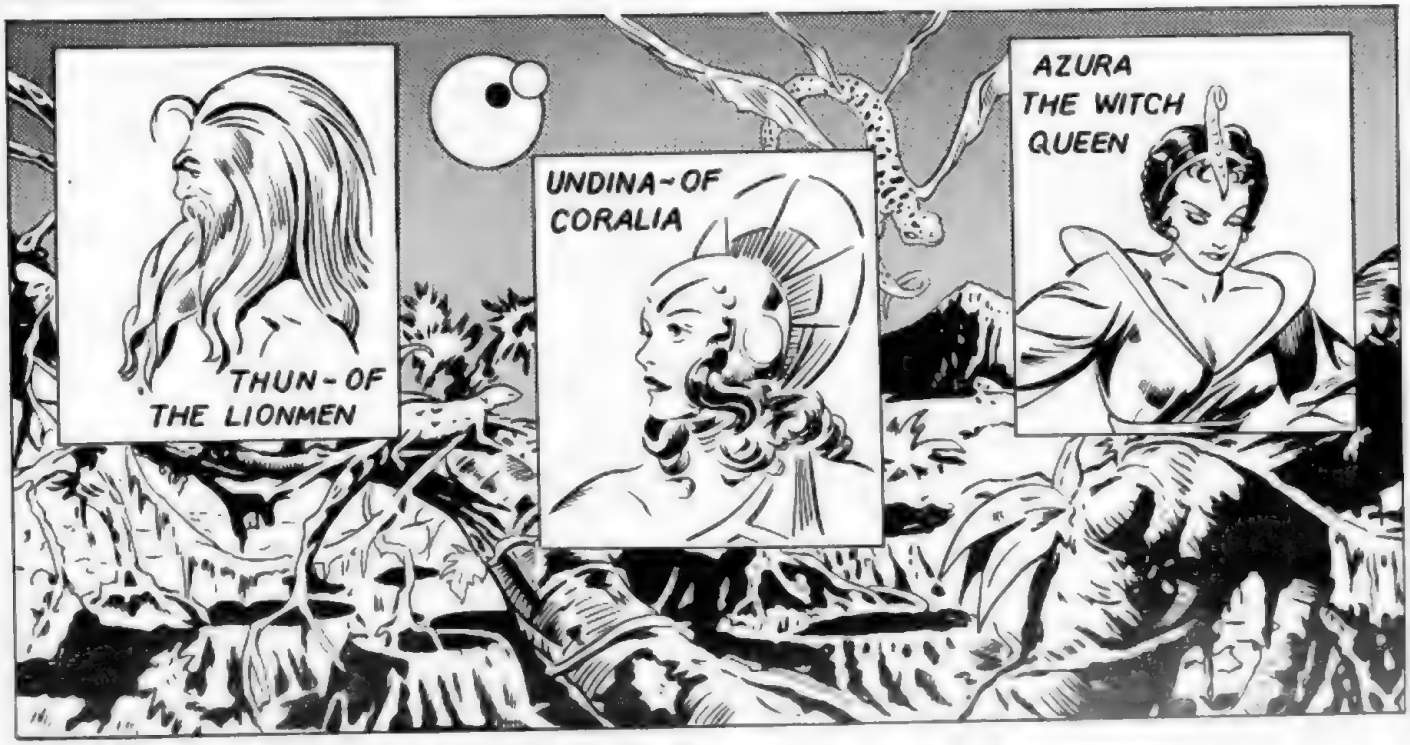




A TECHNOLOGY THAT CAN CREATE WEAPONS LIKE THE LION MEN'S SPACE-GYROS...

AND THE SKY CITY OF THE HAWKMEN

THE WORLD OF MONGO HAS MANY RULERS
KING BARIN AND QUEEN AURA - OF MINGO
RONAL AND FRIA - OF FRIGIA
KING VULTAN - OF THE HAWKMEN


THUN - OF THE LIONMEN
UNDINA - OF CORALIA
AZURA THE WITCH QUEEN

AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER, ALL OF THESE MONARCHS CAME INTO CONFLICT WITH MING THE MERCILESS
FLASH GORDON WOULD NEVER HAVE SEEN MONGO, IF NOT FOR THE GENIUS OF DR. HANS ZARKOV
FLASH'S LOVE, DALE ARDEN, SHARED HIS ADVENTURE
AN ADVENTURE THAT TOOK HIM FROM THE ICE WORLD OF FRIGIA...
TO THE UNDERWATER KINGDOM OF CORALIA...
AND THE FOREST KINGDOM OF ARBORIA

MONGO WAS FINALLY FREED FROM MING, BY MEN LIKE THESE, AND FLASH, DALE AND ZARKOV RETURNED TO EARTH

COUNT BULOK~ LEADER OF A BAND OF OUTLAWS WHO USED ABANDONED SEWERS TO FIGHT MING

ERGON~ CHIEF OF THE POWER MEN - MONGO'S ENGINEERS

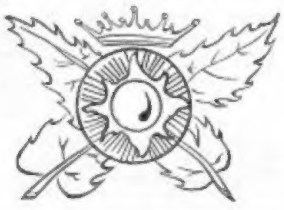
CAPTAIN SUDIN - CAPTAIN OF MING'S FLAGSHIP AND HEAD OF THE NAVAL MUTINY

AFTER A SHORT STAY ON EARTH, FLASH RETURNED TO MONGO ~ THIS TIME LANDING ON A DIFFERENT CONTINENT ~ TROPICA!

FLASH AND GUNDAR

QUEEN DESIRA AND BRAZOR

DESIRA'S THRONE HAD BEEN TAKEN OVER BY BRAZOR ~ FLASH RESCUED DESIRA AND WITH THE AID OF THE DESERT BANDIT GUNDAR, HE RESTORED HER TO THE THRONE! FLASH GORDON, ~HERO OF MONGO~



(continued from page 38)

rest. That episode is "The Power Men of Mongo." All the classic elements are in this episode. A struggle for freedom, betrayal, captivity, lost love and found love, and an uncommon heroism shown by the common people. Flash is dying in an airless coffin. All seems lost. Bang! Ming is overthrown in the middle of the night. He sits on his ass dumbfounded. A deserved, highly satisfying fate. No wonder the episode is my favorite.

With Ming disposed of, a change of pace was definetely called for. Alex Raymond sent his planet-conquering hero back to his own home world for a clash with the Red Sword Invaders. But Earth was much too mundane, compared to the exotic lands of Mongo and, before too long, Flash and company were returning to their adopted planet. The second series of adventures on Mongo is worthy of note. They are exciting, well-told stories. They are not, however, up to the standards set by the earlier adventures. The major reason for the superiority of the first stories is that the later adventures lack a villain comparable to Ming the Merciless. Ming was all powerful. Before Flash Gordon entered his life, Ming was unchallenged by man or beast. He had Flash outclassed from the very begining. Theirs was a touch-and-go battle, with the outcome in doubt from Sunday to Sunday. On his return to Mongo, Flash was battling a lesser grade of fiend. We knew he was going to win against him. In the first series, the smart money was on Ming all the way.

Buck Rogers, the other (and first) science-fantasy adventurer in the newspapers, started out with the same kind of massive challenge that Flash faced. Buck had a world to save from tyranny also. But the Mongols were pickpockets compared to Ming. They were soon disposed of. It took over six years to bring Ming to justice, and he went down fighting. Both had story lines of equal potential; Alex Raymond simply made more of his strip's potential than Phil Nowlan and Dick Calkins did of theirs. As for artwork, there never was any competition. Dick Calkins drew appealing, but crude strips. Alex Raymond illustrated. With a vengeance.

I personally prefered Raymond's artwork during his "The Tournament of Mongo" episode. At this time, for all its beauty, the strip has a basic, barbaric appeal. Armies were forgotten. Individuals had stolen the stage for individual combat and the artwork was reflecting this intense, physical combat between two men. Even the crowd scenes reflected this individual struggle. I don't think there has been another comic strip fight to match this one.

When Alex Raymond left Flash Gordon, the strip lost its greatness. Alex Raymond, the writer, the artist, had made Flash Gordon. Without him, the strip was lackluster. It remained that way until 1966 when Al Williamson wrote and drew Flash Gordon #1 for the new line of King Comics. I don't believe there's another heir to Alex Raymond today. I doubt there'll be one tomorrow. The only shortcooming in Al Williamson's three issues of Flash Gordon was that it lacked the massive challenge, the epic element.

It is this epic element that made Flash Gordon the finest adventure strip ever created. It is this epic element that will restore Flash Gordon to greatness. Someday.

--Tony Isabella

To close this Flash Gordon issue, I feel a mention of Buster Crabbe, the star of the Flash Gordon films, is in order.

Buster Crabbe, was born Clarence Linden Crabe. At the time the serials were made he stood 6' 1" weighed 188 lbs., had a 45" chest, 32" waist, and 16" biceps, for all you data lovers. A graduate of the University of Southern California in 1932, he scored that year as a swimming champion in the Olympic Games in Los Angeles. In 1934, he made a name for himself, when he starred in the feature movie "Tarzan the Fearless." Two years later, he was signed for the lead in Flash Gordon. After the first two serials, Buster became Buck Rogers for 12 more chapters of outer space action. In the mid-1950's Buster starred as Captain Gallant of the Foreign Legion, along with his son, Cullen "Cuffy" Crabbe. Buster has since become executive director of a swimming pool construction firm and has guided Cascade Industries to a leading position in that field.

Well, I see by the illustration below, that two friends of mine have dropped by. I'm going to take a little trip with them. See you next issue gang! - MLG.

FLASH
GORDON